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Understanding Adventist Worship: A Liturgical Theology

Alain G. Coralie

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol and Trinity College
in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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UNDERSTANDING ADVENTIST WORSHIP: A LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

ALAIN G. CORALIE

ABSTRACT

Compared to previous attempts to interpret and interrogate Seventh-day Adventist worship from a systematic, missiological or pastoral perspective, this research has explored Adventist worship through the lenses of liturgical theology. Although largely rooted in a denominational and Free Church context, this study engages into critical conversation with influential Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant liturgical scholars. This study first explores liturgical theology as a valid enterprise to understand Adventist worship. It then traces the history of Seventh-day Adventist corporate worship before addressing its liturgical practices in detail. This diachronic and synchronic study of Adventist liturgical practices is then examined theologically. The study concludes with a reflection on the core organizing principle of this whole, the seventh-day Sabbath. Although written with a particular religious confession in mind, this study aims at enriching the current ecumenical liturgical discourse.

To Caroline and Audrey-Joy for their love and unfailing support.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Every week, millions worship in over 158,000 Seventh-day Adventist congregations around the world.¹ As one of the fastest growing Christian bodies, Adventists now total over 21 million, having added over 5 million in the last ten years.² A “conservative Protestant body of evangelical Christians,”³ Seventh-day Adventists fully embrace the Protestant tenets of *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus*.⁴

Yet, it remains that Seventh-day Adventists have their own particularities. This is reflected in the denomination’s name: Seventh-day Adventist. *Seventh-day* refers to their observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as their principal

¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *2018 Annual Statistical Report 154th Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 2016 and 2017*, last accessed May 6, 2019, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2018.pdf>.

² Official figures may be accessed online at the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics and Research on www.adventiststatistics.org.

³ Nancy J. Vyhmeister, “Who Are Seventh-day Adventists?” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 1.

⁴ One of their cardinal beliefs states that “[i]n Christ’s life of perfect obedience to God’s will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life.” *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 164-165.

day of worship. In addition, the term *Adventist* expresses their hope in the imminent coming of Jesus Christ in glory.

Historically, the Adventist Church largely grew out of the early and mid-nineteenth century revival and the Second Advent movement among many Churches in North America. It originated as an interdenominational movement and later evolved into a separate Christian body. It was officially organised on May 21, 1863.

Generally, Adventist worship has been classified under the Free Church category.⁵ Like many other denominations influenced by the practices of 19th century American evangelicalism, Adventists have traditionally espoused a Protestant hymn-based worship format in which the sermon is the dominant element. This traditional approach has been championed and challenged in discussions and in practice in recent years.⁶

Interestingly, Adventists' ecclesiological self-understanding has been shaped to a large extent by a text that speaks of worship, Revelation 14:6-12. Adventists have particularly focused on verses 6 and 7 that state:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

⁵ Erwin Fahlbusch, Geoffrey William Bromiley, David B Barret, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 5:799. In this study, Free Church should be understood as referring to the North American context.

⁶ Cynthia J. Brown, *Experiencing Worship: God Focused, Christ-Centered, Spirit Filled: A Complete Worship Planning Guide for Pastors, Elders, Worship Leaders and Worship Teams* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2003); Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, ed., *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005); Harold B. Hannum, "Worship: Sacred and Secular," *Elder's Digest*, October/December 2007, 18-20; Lilianne Doukhan, "How Shall We Worship?" *College and University Dialogue*, 15:3 (2003):17-19; Claudia Hirle, "The Worship Recognized by Heaven," *Elder's Digest*, October-December 2003, 16-17.

From their early beginning, Adventists have appropriated this text as their premier text for mission,⁷ motivating church members to invite others to follow and worship the Creator.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite being a fast-growing denomination with an ecclesiological and missiological identity closely linked to worship, Seventh-day Adventists have neither written a complete history of their worship, nor have they comprehensively developed its theology. Although there are a number of reflections on the place and shape of worship in the life of the Church as well as attempts at developing an Adventist theology of worship,⁸ discussions have predominantly centred on pastoral issues surrounding Adventist worship rather than on its historical and theological foundations.

This lack of studies may be attributed to the fact that worship has not been treated as a major subject in Adventist history and theology. The paucity of scholarly works has prevented a closer interaction between Adventist theology and current corporate worship practices, depriving Adventism of a clearer liturgical stance.

This lacuna was addressed half a century ago by Norval Pease. He was the first Adventist theologian to fully develop an Adventist theology of worship. In the introduction of his book, *And Worship Him*, he wrote: “I give my students at the

⁷ Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977).

⁸ John S. Nixon, “Towards a Theology of Worship: An Application at the Oakwood College Seventh-day Adventist Church” (DMin Dissertation, Andrews University, 2003); George W. Reid, “Toward an Adventist Theology of Worship,” Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of SDAs, October 1999; accessed May 22, 2018, <http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents/advtheoworshipdf>; C. Raymond Holmes, “Toward an Adventist Theology of Worship,” *Ministry*, April 1983; C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song!: Worship Renewal for Adventists Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1984); Norval Pease, *And Worship Him* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1967).

Seminary nearly one hundred titles of books on worship, but I have not found one Adventist book to include in that list.”⁹ He further noted that Adventists have published hundreds of books *on the day of worship* but none on the *way of worship*.¹⁰ This might seem to suggest that ‘*a way of worship*’ can be hard to find when worship history and its theology receives scant attention. As a matter of fact, except for Pease’s own attempt and Raymond Holmes’, *Sing a New Song!*,¹¹ no other Adventist books have endeavoured to develop an Adventist theology of worship.

This dearth of scholarly research on Adventist worship is surprising at best and worrying at worst. Worship is the ultimate purpose of the Church, the supreme reason for its existence, the highest end of its calling. It is in worship that God reveals Himself to His Church in a distinct way thereby shaping its spirituality, theology and mission. Moreover, it is in worship that the Church finds the ground of its being and the core of its identity as an *ecclesia* called by God. Within the Adventist tradition, studies on worship have, for the most part, been insufficient and inadequate. As a result, the nature of the relationship between liturgical practices and theology has not been fully examined or satisfactorily expressed. Greater clarity is needed.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to understand Adventist corporate worship by examining its history, practice and theology. As the paramount activity of the Church, worship deserves serious attention and careful analysis. Therefore, the time is ripe for an examination of Adventist worship that will both make an insider’s contribution to

⁹ Norval F. Pease, *op. cit.*, 8.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ C. Raymond Holmes, *op. cit.*

denominational history and theology and provide for the wider academic community the case study of a denomination that has not yet fully apprehended its worship history and its theology.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study is significant in at least three ways. First, it highlights the history and practice of Adventist corporate worship, thereby contributing to the understanding of an overlooked Protestant liturgical tradition. Second, this study intends to yield a clearer and more accurate theological understanding of Adventist worship because it reflects denominational liturgical practices. This serves to fill the void left by previous studies on Adventist worship that have been mostly driven by biblical or systematic reflections that did not fully consider concrete Adventist liturgical practices. This partially explains the lack of a clearer rapport and closer interconnectedness between theological reflection and the concrete realities of congregational worship. Third, although written with a particular religious persuasion in mind, this study aims at enriching the current ecumenical liturgical discourse by presenting an original piece of research worthy of sustained theological investigation. As such, this dissertation offers a case in point on how similar studies could be conducted in the future.

1.5 THE WRITER OF THE STUDY

In his study of Free Church worship, Christopher Ellis observes that “Christians tend to have a home base from which they understand “various theological and confessional issues.”¹² It is important to note, by way of full disclosure and identification of my own “locatedness” as a researcher, that this study is the work of a Seventh-day

¹² Christopher Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology of Worship and Spirituality in Free Church Tradition*, (London, SCM Press, 2004), p. 249

Adventist minister who has been involved in pastoral, mission, and administrative roles within the denomination.

My engagement with Adventist worship has encompassed a broad spectrum of situations. Following years of service as a lay Adventist preacher in my homeland, Mauritius, I did my pastoral internship in a predominantly African-American Adventist congregation while training for the ministry at Andrews University in Michigan, USA. In 1998, I returned to Mauritius, where I served as a pastor who championed contemporary worship services as a means to worship renewal within the denomination. Yet, worship and liturgy only became for me an area of serious academic focus in my years of studies at Oxford where I wrote a dissertation on the impact of postmodern culture on evangelical worship¹³ while maintaining an active preaching ministry in the United Kingdom. From there, I accepted the call to the mission field where I have served as a church administrator in Madagascar and East-Central Africa for the past 13 years.

My several work-related travels on five continents have accorded me the privilege of participating in fairly typical Adventist worship services. It has also exposed me to its more diverse expressions in Adventist communities with Amish, Maasai, Jewish, and Muslim backgrounds. This life journey and ministry have made me appreciate the homogeneous as well as the multi-faceted nature of Adventist worship.

This means that my study of Adventist worship is done with the full awareness that my thinking and writing has been shaped by participation and ministry in Adventism. With my home base in Adventist life and worship, I have experienced this liturgical tradition from within. However, as a researcher, I am aware of the importance of also

¹³ Alain G. Coralie, *Nike Culture and Worship: The Impact of the Postcultural Economy on Contemporary Expressions of Worship*, MTh Dissertation (Oxford University, 2004).

looking at the subject with some critical distance to add focus and enrichment to my study.

It is precisely this correlation and interconnectivity of practice and faith, of liturgy and theology that is explored in this study of Adventist corporate worship. A key theme that will sustain this theological reflection is that the church at worship is the lived experience of the content of Christian theology. Conversely, worship holds theological meaning. This implies that a good understanding of Adventist worship needs to explore both Adventist worship practice as well as Adventist theology in their interconnectedness and reciprocity. This study examines American Adventist worship from its history, practices and theology and show how each are interrelated and cannot be separated from the other. Two chapters explore the practice of Adventist worship and its implicit theology and another two chapters develop a more comprehensive theological understanding of these worship practices. In my effort to elucidate Adventist worship, I will argue that Adventist worship can best be understood by adopting principles from liturgical theology with Sabbath-keeping as the organizing principle.

1.6 METHOD OF THE STUDY

Compared to previous attempts to interpret and interrogate Seventh-day Adventist worship from a systematic, missiological or pastoral perspective, this research follows liturgical theology methodologies that will be developed in the following chapter. To borrow Leanne Van Dyk words, the research objective is to uncover ‘the theological currents that run deep beneath their practices and assumptions.’¹⁴ Although largely rooted

¹⁴ Leanne Van Dyk, ed., *A More Profound Alleluia: Theology and Worship in Harmony* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), xvi.

in a denominational and Free Church context, its analysis will engage in critical conversation with influential Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant liturgical scholars.

1.7 PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter One introduces the background to the study, outlining its purpose, significance and delimitations.

Chapter Two explores liturgical theology as a valid enterprise to understand the worship of a ‘non-liturgical’ Church. It tries to answer a basic question– How can we best understand Adventist worship through the correct use of liturgical theology? This chapter establishes paradigms used by liturgical theologians and proposes a methodology to answer this question.

The main value of this chapter lies in providing a rationale for using liturgical theology to delineate and understand Adventist worship. Important elements that will be noticed in this section are the connections between liturgy and theology.

Chapter Three deals with the history of Adventist worship. It traces the origins of Seventh-day Adventists in mid-nineteenth century America, surveys its historical development, and finally turns to its current expressions. It is subdivided into three periods (i) Early Period with *Millerite Adventism*: 1831-1844, (ii) The Transition Period with *Sabbatarian Adventism*: 1844-1863, and (iii) the Formalizing Period with *Seventh-day Adventism*: 1863-present.

Chapter Four addresses in detail the practice of Adventist worship. It concentrates on the essentials of the weekly worship service by giving special attention to the basic components that work together to make up Adventist worship, namely, prayer, singing, preaching and giving. Baptism and Lord’s Supper will receive relatively less attention since those two ordinances do not form part of the regular Sabbath worship service.

Chapters Five and Six move from the theology embedded in liturgical practices to the elucidation of the theological core of Adventist worship.

Chapter Five analyses the distinct contribution of one of Adventism's founding leaders, Ellen G. White, to the Adventist understanding of worship. Her 70-year charismatic ministry (1844-1915) and prodigious literary output (100,000 pages) have significantly shaped the way Adventists view and practice corporate worship even unto this day. In this chapter, I will examine her views on the practice and theology of Adventist worship, paying attention also to her understanding of the Sabbath and how this understanding impacted her overall theology of worship.

Chapter Six reflects on the Sabbath as the centre of Adventist theological thinking on worship. It is articulated around the theme that Seventh-day Adventist worship, emphasised by Sabbath-keeping, is a celebration of salvation story.

Chapter Seven gives the summary and conclusion of the whole study.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite its broad and encompassing nature, this study is not an exhaustive treatment of Adventist worship. For the purpose of my study, I will limit my scope of investigation to American Adventist corporate worship by examining its (1) history, (2) elements and (3) theology. Still, this study represents the liturgical understanding of the worldwide body of Adventists whose similar worship practices share a common underlying theology.¹⁵ This study is grounded in the principles and methods of liturgical theology.

¹⁵ Kenneth B. Stout, "Seventh Day Adventist Worship," in Paul F Bradshaw, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 431.

1.9 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

My literature review considers specific studies on worship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the sake of clarity, I will classify the reviewed literature in books, dissertations and Adventist publications. As much as possible, I will present the literary items in chronological order. My purpose in this literature review is to relate previous studies to my theological investigation in an effort to build on their significant contributions.

1.10 STUDIES ON WORSHIP IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

1.10.1 Books

As I mentioned earlier, the theology of worship has received scant attention from Adventist scholars. Only two major works can be cited in regard to the development of an Adventist theology of worship. The first book, published in 1967, is *And Worship Him*,¹⁶ written by Norval F. Pease, a retired professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University in Michigan, USA. The second book, *Sing a New Song! Worship Renewal for Adventists Today*,¹⁷ published in 1984, was written by Raymond Holmes, a professor of preaching and worship at the same institution.

Pease's book, *And Worship Him*, provides a much-needed introduction to the quest for an Adventist theology of worship. It is a thoughtful application of a comprehensive understanding of the biblical, theological, and historical aspects of Christian worship.

¹⁶ Pease, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Holmes, *op. cit.*

Pease's contribution to the development of an Adventist theology of worship is significant in several ways. First, Pease emphasises the critical role of the entire Biblical narrative in examining the foundational realities of worship. As Pease recognises, it is God's character as revealed in His initial and continuous movement toward humanity that constitutes the ground for true worship.¹⁸ Accordingly, worship, for Pease, must be seen as humanity's response to God's initiative, not simply an expression of human experience.¹⁹

Another of Pease's contributions to an Adventist theology of worship is his insistence that Christian worship had reached its climax in the New Testament. In his discussion on the form and content of Adventist worship service, Pease regularly appeals to the apostolic Church, but more importantly to the Christ event. Throughout his study, he maintains a Christocentric focus on worship, looking at clear connections between OT worship practices and their fulfilment in Christ as well as NT worship patterns and their implications for Christians today.

Most crucial to my dissertation is Pease's assertion that worship cannot take place without liturgy and that liturgy should reflect theological beliefs. Pease argues that the truths confessed need to be illustrated by the actions of a congregation in worship.²⁰ He further argues that Adventist congregations have often been guilty of liturgical ambiguity. This has been a disservice to the denomination, according to Pease, because liturgical ambiguity does not illustrate correctly what the Church believes. This dissertation will

¹⁸ Pease, 13.

¹⁹ Ibid., 66.

²⁰ Pease, 51.

explore this area because there seems to be evidence that Adventist worship has not fully caught up with its theology and vice versa.

Raymond Holmes's *Sing a New Song*, builds on the foundations laid by Norval Pease.²¹ As the full title suggests, his book is about the necessity for liturgical renewal in the Adventist Church. Holmes' work is equally divided into two sections. The first section is a biblical-theological section that probes the theological grounds for Adventist worship. The second section looks more closely at how Adventist corporate worship can more clearly and faithfully illustrate Adventist beliefs.

Holmes' *Sing a Song* constitutes an extremely valuable contribution to any study on Adventist worship. Holmes begins his study by placing Adventist worship in the context of the significance of liturgical renewal within Christianity within previous decades. After underlining what Adventists share in common with other Christians, Holmes goes on to delineate what is unique to Adventism. In discussing the distinct liturgical understanding of the Adventist Church, Holmes describes how the denomination's beliefs have had minimal impact on its liturgy. This is what motivates Holmes to plead for a greater integration of theology and liturgical practices.²² Holmes' greatest contribution was to propose that Adventism's distinctive doctrinal emphasis should be reflected in its worship. He singled out the Sabbath, the heavenly ministry of Christ following His ascension, and the Second Advent as key doctrines that need to be illustrated liturgically in every Adventist service.²³ Such a doctrinally-oriented worship, according to Holmes, would serve as a recapitulation of salvation history. Looking back

²¹ Holmes, xi.

²² Holmes, 10-17.

²³ Holmes, 27-59.

to creation by worshipping on the Sabbath day, the Church exercises its historical memory. By looking up to the heavenly ministry of Christ, attention is drawn to Christ's continuing priesthood on our behalf. By looking forward to the Second Advent, the Church fixes its hope on God's climactic intervention in human history. Within such an understanding, past, present, and future dimensions of human existence are taken into account. The aim is to give worshippers a sense of meaning, identity, purpose, and destiny.

My research shares Pease's and Holmes's convictions. However, their studies are limited to the application of doctrinal/theological convictions to Adventist congregational worship. The liturgical history and actual worship practices of Adventists receive virtually no attention. In the present dissertation, I endeavour to address Adventist worship more comprehensively.

1.10.2 Dissertations

On the doctoral study level, several studies have investigated various elements of Adventist worship.²⁴ An overall majority of dissertations on Adventist worship are contextual in focus and practical in nature.²⁵ However, there are four dissertations that

²⁴ See for instance, Higashide, 2010; Jeryl Lee Cunningham-Fleming, *We Sang Alleluia, Praise the Lord!: African-American Identity and the Use and Reception of Music Within a Seventh-day Adventist Church in New York City, 1970 – 2010*, PhD Dissertation (Lexington, KY: University Of Kentucky, 2013); Wayne Frederick Antonio Bucknor, *The Changing Role of Music in the Liturgy of the African American Seventh-day Adventist Church*, PhD Dissertation (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 2008); John Harold Hobart Mathews, *Towards Understanding Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Preaching*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1991).

²⁵ See for instance, Gerald Hansel Jones, *A Model for Multicultural Worship Developed at the Fallbrook Seventh-day Adventist Church*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2014); Thomas Masimba, *Application of Biblical Worship Principles in the New Life Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nairobi*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2011); Robles F. Demetrio, *Developing a Cross-Generational Life-Transforming Worship Service: An Approach to Involving and Empowering Youth and Young Adults at the San Diego Filipino-American Seventh-day Adventist Church*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2010); Kenneth Roy Campbell, *Building A Place of Worship: The Journey of the Downsvew Seventh-day Adventist Church in Toronto*,

were especially helpful to my research. From a historical point of view, James Wilson's dissertation²⁶ was especially relevant as it pointed to charismatic features that characterized early Adventist worship. However, because of the limited nature of his research and the increasing access to primary sources, I have attempted to go much further in looking at and interpreting those historical characteristics.

Viviane Haenni's dissertation on the Colton Celebration Center²⁷ addressed pertinent historical, sociological, and theological/philosophical issues regarding Adventist worship. One of the critical findings of Haenni's study has been "a timely need for Adventism to recount its own history, apply to worship its holistic approach to reality, and investigate new models of hermeneutics, ecclesiology, sacramental liturgy, and Church structure."²⁸ Haenni's survey of the development of Adventist worship, albeit

DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2005); Nelson Fernando de Oliveira, *An Integration of Quality Assurance and Existing Worship Components: A Model to Improve Worship in the Small Seventh-day Adventist Church*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2002); Jaime Cruz, *Worship Attitudes of Seventh-day Adventist Churchgoers at Montemorelos, Mexico*, DMin Project Report (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1978); John S. Nixon, *Towards a Theology of Worship: An Application at the Oakwood College Seventh-day Adventist Church*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2003); James T. Bingham, *Liturgy and Ritual as Religious Education: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1984); Ivan C. Blake, *A Proposed Model Worship Service Incorporating a Biblical View of the Holiness of God for the Urbandale, Michigan Seventh-day Adventist Church*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1996). James Doggette, *Emotion and Rationality in African American Seventh-day Adventist Worship*, DMin Dissertation (Claremont, CA: Claremont School of Theology, 1992).

²⁶ James Michael Wilson, *Enthusiasm and Charismatic Manifestations in Sabbatarian Adventism with Applications for the Seventh-day Adventists of the Late Twentieth Century*, DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1995).

²⁷ Viviane Haenni, *The Colton Celebration Congregation: A Case Study in American Adventist Worship Renewal, 1986–1991*, PhD dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1996).

²⁸ Haenni, quoted from abstract.

brief,²⁹ was helpful because it outlined Adventist worship into three distinct periods. I have followed her historical outline but have examined each period more closely.

Another dissertation which I found helpful was Daniel Oscar Plenc's, "Hacia Un Criterio Teológico Para La Adoración Adventista."³⁰ In his research, Plenc proposes liturgical parameters that would guide Adventist worship. His research was conducted in the context of tensions surrounding liturgical experimentations within the denomination. According to Plenc, these liturgical tensions exist because of the deficiency of a theological criterion to evaluate Adventist liturgy. As a result, he developed criteria for Adventist worship through a systematic analysis of the doctrine of God, anthropology, soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology. Plenc's analysis of those doctrines lead him to suggest that Adventist worship should reflect God's character, maintain a balance between the rational and emotional elements, be Christocentric and Spirit led, be communal and evangelistic, and look towards God's final victory over evil.

I found the last section especially relevant to my research because of its emphasis that an eschatological orientation means that worship (a) is not limited to the present time but projects itself towards eternity, (b) is located in the context of the great controversy between good and evil, and (c) involves whole-hearted obedience, not simply rituals.³¹ Despite its wide approach, Plenc's dissertation provides an important background study for my research.

²⁹ Haenni, 38-59.

³⁰ Daniel Oscar Plenc, *Hacia Un Criterio Teológico Par La Adoración Adventista: Elementos Para Su Evaluación Litúrgica*, PhD Dissertation (Entre Rios, Argentina: Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002).

³¹ Plenc, 405-406.

Finally, the newly released dissertation by David A. Williams (April 2018),³² provided me with extra primary sources on the historical development of Adventist worship, especially in regards to music. Williams's approach was multifaceted. He employed liturgical history, ritual studies, musicology, and liturgical theology to study four Adventist congregations. The purpose of his research was to understand how Black and White Adventists derive their spiritual identity from their experience of music during weekly congregational worship.

The historical section³³ on Adventist worship and music from 1840 to 1894 was very relevant in the sense that Williams's research went further than any previous studies on these subjects. In his research, Williams demonstrated how Adventism developed within the context of American revivalism. Adventists borrowed from that tradition for its early liturgical practice, merging their own distinctive beliefs to shape their own worship experience. Williams stressed the significant role of music, especially hymnody, in instilling the faith experientially, thus forming Adventist liturgical identity.³⁴ More significantly to our understanding of Adventist worship, Williams's study led him to conclude that early Adventist worship practices were quite diverse and "the shape of Adventist liturgy, as seen through the well of time, appears murky at best."³⁵ For this reason, he argues that "[w]e cannot fully articulate with absolute certainty what Adventist

³² David A. Williams, *Worship Music as Spiritual Identity: An Examination of Music in the Liturgy among Black and White Adventists in the United States from 1840-1944*, PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2018).

³³ Williams, 242-388.

³⁴ Williams, 386-388.

³⁵ Williams, 386-387.

liturgy always looked like.”³⁶ From a historical point of view, Williams’s study proves to be a goldmine. However, despite its voluminous size (998 pages), it sparsely explores the theological implications of Adventist liturgical practices.

1.10.3 Publications

My dissertation draws heavily upon primary Adventist sources. These include books, reports, manuscripts, letters, Church bulletins, periodicals, magazines and journals. Periodicals such as *Signs of the Times* and *Adventist Review*³⁷ were excellent sources to chronicle the history of Adventist worship practices. *Ministry Magazine* offered an excellent window into the Adventist understanding of worship from a pastoral perspective.³⁸

Generally, *Ministry* journal articles present and/or evaluate Adventist worship by looking at its biblical, historical, and theological foundations. From those articles, I discerned an Adventist understanding of worship that emphasises an eschatologically-oriented, Word-based worship that tries to be faithful to God by striking a delicate balance between fervor and reverence, informality and order, joyfulness and solemnity. Church official documents like *Statement of Beliefs*, *Church Manual*, and *Minister’s Handbook* were also examined.

In 1999, the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church published a paper entitled “Toward an Adventist Theology of

³⁶ Williams, 387.

³⁷ First published as “*Present Truth*” and subsequently as “*The Adventist Review*” and “*Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*.”

³⁸ Published since 1928, *Ministry* is directed towards religious professionals. It has a wide readership of 18,000 Adventist pastors and 62,000 pastors of other denominations, accessed May 22, 2018, <http://www.ministrymagazine.org/about>.

Worship,”³⁹ written by George W. Reid, one of its former directors. This paper covers a wide range of issues regarding worship (its definition, its Trinitarian focus, its divine and human elements, its biblical manifestations, as well as its contemporary expressions) and then highlights three basic principles: “(1) Worship is theocentric (2) Worship must concur with sound theology, and (3) Worship must be patterned on biblical norms.”⁴⁰ Reid closes by saying, “A firmly Adventist theology of worship is possible and is in development, but much remains to be done.”⁴¹ Almost twenty years later, an Adventist theology has not been fully developed yet.

Denis Fortin’s contribution to the ecumenical discussion on worship is also worth mentioning.⁴² In sharing an Adventist perspective on worship, he argues that an Adventist corporate worship emphasises both the transcendence and the immanence of God. It is motivated by God’s intention and action towards the human race. Within such an understanding, rites should not be empty ceremonies but serve as powerful reminders of God’s grace that was supremely manifested in Christ.

More recently, Fernando Canale also tried to elucidate Adventist worship. In an article written in the *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, he identifies what he considers to be key Adventist “Principles of Worship and Liturgy.”⁴³ Canale recognises that Adventist systematic theologians have not yet developed guiding worship principles.

³⁹ George W. Reid, “Toward an Adventist Theology of Worship,” Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed May 22, 2018, <http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents/advtheoworshippdf>.

⁴⁰ Reid, 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

⁴² Denis Fortin, “A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective on Worship” in Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, eds., *Worship Today: Understanding Practice, Ecumenical Implications*. Faith and Order Paper No. 194, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 166-170.

⁴³ Fernando Canale, “Principles of Worship and Liturgy,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 20/1-2 (2009): 89-111.

He identifies six guiding principles for Adventist congregational worship: (1) authentic worship can only exist when God manifests Himself in the midst of His people (principle of existence); (2) the resurrected Christ, not preaching, music or rituals, is to be the centre of attraction in worship (principle of attraction); (3) Liturgical forms are to be attractive and lead to full daily commitment to Christ (principle of creativity); (4) liturgy is to reflect God's holiness (principle of content); (5) because of sin, human reasoning and liturgical experimentation should always be checked by the immutable principles of Scripture (principle of suspicion), and lastly, (6) liturgical forms should impact the spirit of the worshipper positively (principle of spiritual effect). Canale's article is especially significant because of his attempt at systematizing what has been a general Adventist understanding of congregational worship.

This brief survey demonstrates my indebtedness to previous students of Adventist worship. They have cleared the way so that others like me could build on their invaluable contributions. However, I want to emphasize that, although I have been enlightened in many ways by those previous studies, I understand that they have not gone far enough in describing Adventist worship. Rather they project an ideal of what Adventist worship should be like. Generally, little attention has been given to its history and practice. Its theology is also tentative.

Concerning my own research, I have adopted a more comprehensive approach to understanding Adventist worship. In an effort to be as precise as possible, I have largely worked with primary sources in an effort to elucidate the history, practice, and theology of Adventist worship.

This dissertation covers quite a large subject. It includes the historical and the doctrinal, the systematic as well as the liturgical. It spans both the theoretical and the applied. For that reason, this research runs the risk of over-simplification. Issues need to

be analysed critically and due importance must be given to details. And yet we could also run the risk of focusing so narrowly on details that we fail to notice broader principles. Careful observation, proper evaluation and a balanced approach are utmost requirements. This is where liturgical theology can help in exploring the concrete liturgical practices of a church tradition and subsequently probe the theological grounding of those same liturgical practices.

CHAPTER TWO

2 UNDERSTANDING ADVENTIST WORSHIP THROUGH LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Who are Adventists and how do they worship? What is their history and how did their worship practices change over time? What do those changes signify? What does their worship tell about their understanding of God and of themselves? Such questions are important as we attempt to work towards an understanding of Adventist worship. As a theological discipline, liturgical theology asks such questions. As we embark on investigating Adventist worship, it is important that we have a closer look at this theological method.

2.1 UNDERSTANDING LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Since this research is an exercise in liturgical theology, it is proper at this point that we take a closer look at this theological discipline and see how it can inform our understanding of Adventist worship. Such an exercise is more complicated than it appears since theologians approach it from varied perspectives because they view the relationship between Scripture and tradition, liturgical acts and theology differently. This explains Teresa Berger's admission that "recent discussions concerning the relationship of liturgy and theology" leaves us "with an impression of bewildering variety."¹

¹ Teresa Berger, "Liturgy: A Forgotten Subject Matter of Theology," *Studia Liturgica* 17 (1987), 16.

As a relatively recent academic discipline, liturgical theology is still a work in progress in search of a precise method. To situate our discussion and see how liturgical theology can help us in investigating Adventist worship, I want to look briefly at the reciprocity between theology and worship under five integrated headings: (i) the importance of worship to the task of theology, (ii) liturgical theology: its meaning; (iii) liturgical theology: its criticism; (iv) liturgical theology as a methodology to understand Adventist Worship (v) liturgical time: Sabbath as an organising principle.

2.1.1 The Importance of Worship to the Task of Theology

Worship is important to the task of theology. First, it is because of the nature of theology itself. According to Alister McGrath, theology can simply be defined as “reflection upon the God whom Christians worship and adore.”² Theology and worship are inextricably linked. Unfortunately, Adventist theologians have not vigorously pursued this link between theological reflection and worship. Yet, ideally, theology begins and ends in worship³ because it finds both its source and its goal in God. This explains why ‘exploring worship is a way into some of the richest veins of theology’.⁴ As Vanhoozer puts it:

The way we pray affects what we believe and what we do. There is a mutually edifying relationship between worship and theology: worship is ritualized theology; theology is reflective worship. The quality of our worship is therefore

² Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 1.

³ As Barth reminds us: It is imperative to recognise the essence of theology as lying in the liturgical action of adoration, thanksgiving and petition. The old saying *lex orandi lex credendi*, far from being a pious statement, is one of the most profound descriptions of theological methods. Barth’s theological reasoning renders theology as an offering of ourselves to God where theological reflection on God is never divorced from prayer to God. See Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960), 90.

⁴ David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 54.

an index of the quality of our theology (and vice versa). The priority, however, lies with worship.⁵

Second, worship is important to the task of theology because of its relationship to ecclesiology. It is almost impossible to understand the nature of the Church without understanding its worship. Worship is the place where the Church discovers and rediscovers itself. As the Reformed theologian Jean-Jacques von Allmen explains, “by its worship the Church becomes itself, becomes conscious of itself, and confesses itself as a distinct entity. Worship thus allows the Church to emerge in its true nature.”⁶ This also implies that a crucial task of theology is to analyse, understand, evaluate and inform the worship of the Church.

Third, worship is important to the task of theology because theology and worship share one thing in common: the relentless pursuit of God. Seeking God for who God is remains the complementary task of both worship and theology.⁷ As Catherine LaCugna puts it, “theology, like liturgy, relies on the language of participation and involvement.”⁸

⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 410, quoted in H. Wayne Johnson, “Practicing Theology on a Sunday Morning: Corporate Worship as Spiritual Formation,” *Trinity Journal* 31NS (2010), 30.

⁶ Jean-Jacques von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 42.

⁷ According to a classical definition, theology is *fides querrens intellectum*, ‘faith seeking understanding’. Our ability to think and speak meaningfully about God rests upon our desire to enlarge and deepen our prior knowledge of God. Worship follows the same quest according to Thomas Torrance. Stressing the intellectual dimension of worship, he writes that “[w]orship is the exercise of the mind in the contemplation of God in which wonder and awe play an important part in stretching and enlarging our vision or in opening up our conceptual forms to take in that which by its nature far out runs them.” See T. F. Torrance, “God and Rationality,” 240 and G. Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship: Doctrine and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 437. According to these two definitions, theology and worship involve a persistent engagement with God.

⁸ LaCugna, Catherine Mowry, “Can Liturgy Ever Again Become a Source for Theology?” *Studia Liturgica* 19.1 (1989), 12.

This participation and involvement means that the pursuit of God in thought and praise goes beyond the informational. It embraces the relational and the transformational.

Fourth, worship is important to the task of theology because theology and worship need each other. Properly understood, theology and worship nourish each other because they are interrelated and inseparable. Each is incomplete without the other. This reciprocity between theology and worship is well attested in contemporary theological discourse.⁹ An increasing number of voices argue that theology embraces worship and vice versa. John Witvliet, for instance, insists that “worship both shapes and reflects the theological imagination of a given community.”¹⁰ Nicolas Wolterstorff, in his exploration of liturgical theology makes this observation: “In its practice of enacting the liturgy the church hands on the understanding of God implicit in its worship.”¹¹

2.1.2 Liturgical Theology: Its Meaning

Liturgical theology is a particular discipline within the larger spectrum of Christian theological enquiry on worship. Theologians tend to examine worship with

⁹ See for example, Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Praise of God in Worship: Doctrine and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1994); Gordon Lathrop’s trilogy, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*; *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology*; and *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993, 1999 and 2003, respectively); Leanne Van Dyk, ed., *A More Profound Alleluia*, 2005); David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992); Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as a Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006); Maxwell E. Johnson, *Praying and Believing in Early Christianity: The Interplay between Christian Worship and Doctrine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).

¹⁰ John Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 17. In other words, we worship as we understand God and understand God through our worship. Crucially, this suggests that sound theological thinking enhances worship whereas distorted theology has the adverse effect. Equally, this also implies that our worship practices can either enhance or blur our understanding of God.

¹¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 165.

different tools, methods and emphasis. Dwight Vogel enumerates a number of them: theology of worship, liturgy as theology, theology of liturgy, theology in liturgy, theology because liturgy (doxological theology), and theology and life.¹² All these methodologies fall into basically two camps: (1) those who use a set of doctrines or beliefs which are then applied in a systematic fashion to speak about worship; (2) others observe the actual liturgical practices of a community to draw theological insights and meaning from those practices. Liturgical theology falls into the second category. Although this study also examines what Adventist theologians have said about worship to provide a background context, it adopts the principles of liturgical theology in its organising principle: the Sabbath.

Lutheran liturgical theologian, Gordon Lathrop, defines liturgical theology as a way of thinking about God as He is encountered in worship. He puts it this way: “Explicitly, liturgical theology seeks to speak about who God is as this God is encountered in liturgy.”¹³ The worship experience of the Church communicates knowledge about God. The content and juxtaposition of hymns, prayers, liturgical texts, preaching, Church ordinances, etc. are rich conveyors of theology and to a large extent give to worshippers and congregations their Christian worldview.

Reflecting upon the worship of the Church is an important task of theology. However, this reflection cannot be limited to abstract notions. It must also engage the concrete experiences of the Church in worship. In fact, many liturgical theologians emphasize one point: theology is done every time worship takes place. They argue that

¹² Dwight W. Vogel, “Liturgical Theology: A Conceptual Geography,” in Dwight W. Vogel (ed.), *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 4.

¹³ Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 49.

worshippers are, in a way, theologians whether they know it or not. The reason is that each time a believer comes before God to offer praise and thanksgiving, petition and confession, she does it with either a clear or a vague idea of who God is.¹⁴

If the foregoing is true on an individual level, it is also true when the Church gathers for worship. The corporate public worship of the Church can be a great source for theological reflection because theology and worship necessarily come into interaction whenever there is a worshipping assembly. Every worship service, in one way or another, reflects an understanding of God and a core system of beliefs. This suggests that every worship service offers a privileged view on what a community believes about God and about themselves. It tells about their beliefs, their theological convictions, their values as well as their understanding of their role in God's plan of redemption for the world.

The exploration of this interplay between worship and theology is one of the major tasks of liturgical theology. In his lively exploration of *What is Liturgical Theology? A Study in Methodology*, Catholic liturgical scholar, David W. Fagerberg, surveys the method and theological understanding behind liturgical theology¹⁵ before proposing that the liturgy is the very basis for doing theology. For Fagerberg, the task of liturgical theology is not to reduce worship to an afterthought of systematic theology. Instead, he sees the liturgical act as a primary resource for doing theology. According to Fagerberg, the liturgy *per se* should be viewed as a 'theological act' experienced and

¹⁴ Or to use the words of Evagrius of Pontus: 'If you are a theologian, you will truly pray; and if you truly pray, you are a theologian.' To put it in more modern words: To 'know God is to worship Him' and to worship God is to 'know Him.' Liturgical theologians do not study the history and practice of Church traditions for the sake of understanding rituals alone. They argue that liturgy is primarily an act of theology. They understand the liturgy as both a source and subject of theology. They are not satisfied with describing liturgical acts only. They are interested in the theological meaning of liturgical acts.

¹⁵ David W. Fagerberg, *What is Liturgical Theology?: A Study in Methodology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).

engaged by the worshipping community itself.¹⁶ He then makes a case that Christians do not learn the grammar of their faith primarily through Sunday school, catechism classes, or graduate seminars in theological method. Instead, “[l]iturgy creates a Christian grammar in the people of God who live through the encounter with the paschal mystery.”¹⁷ More importantly, according to Fagerberg, it is the *leitourgia* that establishes theology, not the other way round. Yet, the question remains: if our response to God become our basis for understanding, are we not engaging into circular reasoning?

David Fagerberg’s vision of the theological enterprise is shared by Aidan Kavanagh, another Roman Catholic scholar. According to Kavanagh, “liturgical tradition, in whatever Christian idiom, is the dynamic condition within which theological reflection is done, within which the Word of God is appropriately understood.”¹⁸ Put differently, the Church in worship, is the primary arena for theological engagement and spiritual nourishment. The foundations of theology are found in the enactment of the liturgy itself where “worship and belief of Christians converge, meet, entwine, and meld in the liturgical act.”¹⁹ On these grounds, he contends that an assembly’s liturgical act is

¹⁶ Fagerberg, *op.cit.*, 135.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁸ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 7-8.

¹⁹ Accordingly, it is the liturgy that shapes our theological understanding. To prove his point, Kavanagh argues that Judaism and Christianity have expressed their belief for thousands of years ‘not in books but by participation in assemblies that have met regularly, at least once a week, for worship of the living God (Kavanagh, p 55-56). In addition, Kavanagh argues that it is God’s presence, not faith, that drew Moses to the burning bush, and that creeds did not produce baptism; rather, baptism gave rise to Trinitarian creeds (Kavanagh, 92). For Kavanagh, the Church at worship is a theological community, or better, a community of theologians who come to know God in the act of worship. Worship, Kavanagh argues, triggers a life-changing encounter with the living God. Because of God’s active involvement in the worship of His people, it becomes ‘an act of believing, an act of faith in the One who both summons the Church and enables its worship’ (Kavanagh, 89).

‘*theologia* itself’,²⁰ “a theological act of the most all-encompassing, integral, and foundational kind.”²¹ Kavanagh distinguishes “primary” from “secondary” theologies. Primary theology is what the Church does in its worship; secondary theology is the subsequent act of reflection upon the experience. It is this initial experience that gives way to a second order of theological reflection.²² Hence, what we find here is a primacy given to the liturgical act, dislodging Scripture, doctrines or creeds as the primary basis for theological reflection.

This idea, although ancient, found one of its clearest expression in the Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann who in his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*²³ understands liturgical theology to be concerned with the “elucidation of the meaning of worship.”²⁴ The theological task involves an effort “to explain how the Church expresses

²⁰ Kavanagh, 75.

²¹ Kavanagh, 89. Kavanagh argues that it is this living engagement with God that shapes the worshipping community. The worship experience does not leave the worshippers as it finds them at the beginning. Rather, liturgical acts impact the assembly so deeply that it requires a constant “modulating, self-critical, and reflective adjustment to God-wrought change in the assembly’s life of faith which constitutes the condition for doing all forms of theology and of understanding the Word of God” (Kavanagh, 89). It is this encounter and *adjustment* that constitutes the *theologia prima*, the ‘primary theology of the Church itself.’ (Kavanagh in Dwight W. Vogel, ed., *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 95. Liturgy becomes the ground for the people’s understanding of God. It is a sacred space in which the Church undertakes its *theologia prima*. This actual experience of worship is a divine encounter in which God manifest His presence through the whole liturgical process. It is in the Scripture read, word proclaimed, prayers offered, hymns sung and most importantly in the Eucharist celebrated that God is perceived and understood to be present and available to His people. According to Kavanagh, this is the foundational and fundamental platform on which all theological discourse and discovery must develop.

²² Commenting on Kavanagh, Lutheran Gordon Lathrop asserts that “the communal meaning of the liturgy is exercised by the gathering itself.” He further adds that the role of secondary liturgical theology is to ‘discern the form and articulate the crucial meanings of the assembly.’ Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 5, 7.

²³ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1966).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

and fulfills herself in this act [of worship].”²⁵ Schmemmann considers the task of liturgical theology as ‘decoding’ the meaning of the liturgy²⁶ by translating “what is expressed by the language of worship-its structures, its ceremonies, its text and its whole ‘spirit’- into the language of theology.”²⁷ According to Schmemmann, the elucidation of the meaning of the liturgical act takes place in the experience itself. For Schmemmann the *lex orandi is (est)* the Church’s *lex credendi*, and the theological task is ultimately an interpretative and descriptive process that attempts “to grasp the ‘theology’ as revealed in and through liturgy.”²⁸ According to Schmemmann, the task of liturgical theology is “to consider the Church’s everlasting ‘rule of prayer’ and to hear and understand in it the ‘rule of faith.’”²⁹ Accordingly, liturgy becomes the ontological condition of theology; the source and foundation of theology and “one of the life-giving sources of the knowledge of God.”³⁰

Perhaps the most distinctive element of Schmemmann’s approach to liturgical theology concerns his emphasis on the relationship between worship and theology. Whereas most theologians use theology to understand worship (what Schmemmann terms ‘theology of worship’), the Orthodox theologian reverses the approach by emphasising the study of worship practices of his Christian tradition to uncover its theological meaning. In other words, he prioritises liturgy over theology based on the premise that the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Schmemmann., 18.

²⁷ Ibid., 19.

²⁸ Schmemmann, “Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform,” 218.

²⁹ Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 25. Actually, Schmemmann paraphrases the old Latin tag by adding an *est* to the original phrase emphasises (the rule of praying *is* the rule of belief) which he interprets as underscoring the priority of liturgy in defining belief.

³⁰ Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 19.

liturgy already contains the substance of theology. Schmemmann traces his approach to what he considers to be the traditional (Patristic) and authentic (versus Scholastic) way of studying worship.

For Schmemmann, the most critical element in doing liturgical theology is to find the elusive *ordo*. He writes: “To find the *ordo* behind the ‘rubrics,’ regulations and rules – to find the unchanging principle, the living form or ‘logos’ of worship as a whole, within that which is accidental and temporary: this is the primary task.”³¹

Yet, one still has to ask the question: Is the study of the liturgical act, not primarily a study about the worshippers’ religious experiences than a study in theology? Does this not prioritise humanity’s acts over God’s revelation? Does it make sense as a whole and can it be taken seriously? We now turn to the criticism of this discipline.

2.1.3 Liturgical Theology: Its Criticism

This prioritization of liturgy over theology as espoused by Schmemmann and many of his followers makes a number of other liturgical theologians quite uncomfortable. Appreciative of the fact that there is an organic link between worship and theology, they nevertheless argue that tracing the pure essence of theology to the Church fathers or inherited traditions is based on weak historical and theological premises.³²

On the historical front, Michael Aune puts it bluntly that “the sort of unity and synthesis in theology, worship, and life that Schmemmann believed to be exemplified in the

³¹ Schmemmann, *op.cit.*, 31.

³² Paul Bradshaw, “Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology,” *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 11.2 (1998), 193.

patristic period simply did not exist.”³³ Instead, for Aune and others, historical research increasingly points to the diversity of practice that highlights the fact that finding a pure *ordo* is simply impossible. For instance, Maxwell Johnson points out that “that there is probably no such thing as a pure *ordo* existing anywhere in some idealized form apart from its very concrete, cultural, ecclesial, and ritual linguistic expressions.”³⁴ Johnson considers this *ordo* to be “a logical construct, an abstraction made on the basis of very minimal descriptions of the patterns of Christian liturgy in the early period.”³⁵ Similarly, Paul Bradshaw observes that “there are very few things that Christians have consistently done in worship at all times and in all places.”³⁶ He also points out that “the ‘deep structures’ running through the liturgy are very few indeed if we apply the test of universal observance to them.”³⁷ As for Bryan Spinks, his basic concern about liturgical theology is “the sometimes narrow and esoteric concerns that that method has spawned.”³⁸

On the theological front, the attacks are also many. Edward Kilmartin synthesises the issue as follows:

The authentic liturgical traditions are not simply one among many sources of knowledge of faith, but the source and the central witness of the life of faith and so of all theology. As a consequence, this one-sided stress on the value of

³³ Michael B. Aune, “Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship,” *Worship* 81.1 (2007), 51.

³⁴ Maxwell E. Johnson, “Can we Avoid Relativism in Worship? Liturgical Norms in the Light of Contemporary Liturgical Scholarship,” *Worship* 74.2 (2000), 145.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁶ Bradshaw, 184.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

³⁸ Bryan D. Spinks, “From Liturgical Theology to Liturgical Theologies: Schememann’s Legacy in Western Churches,” *St. Vladimir Theological Quarterly* 53:2-3 (2009), 232.

liturgical-practice grounding of theological knowledge, Scripture and other sources of theology are placed in the background of his theological reflection.³⁹

In essence, the fundamental point being made here is that giving too much weight to liturgical praxis in the formulation of theology distorts the whole theological enterprise, especially for those who believe in the *sola Scriptura* principle. This explains why a number of liturgical theologians have worked at placing the liturgical-grounding of theology in its proper perspective. For instance, Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright, although appreciating the organic link and interdependence between liturgical practices and doctrinal formulations, in *lex orandi lex credendi*⁴⁰ stresses the fact that there needs to be a “critical primacy of doctrine in relation to liturgy” which he argues “has remained characteristic of Protestantism.”⁴¹ More interestingly, he goes further in saying that doctrinal control over liturgy is not only a Protestant idea but can be traced back to the early Church and even in Roman Catholic history.⁴² The Church over the centuries, maintains Wainwright, has always provided “corrective guidelines for liturgical practice.”⁴³

³⁹ Edward Kilmartin, “Theology as Theology of the Liturgy” in Vogel, ed., *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 107.

⁴⁰ Commenting on his massive project in writing a systematic theology from a doxological perspective, Wainwright writes: “The linguistic ambiguity of the Latin tag [*lex orandi, lex credendi*] corresponds to a material interplay which in fact takes place between worship and doctrine in Christian practice: worship influences doctrine, and doctrine worship. Much of the present book is taken up with explorations of that interplay” (Wainwright, *Doxology*, 218).

⁴¹ Wainwright, 219.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 251-274.

⁴³ According to Wainwright, this reversal of the liturgy-theology relation from *doctrine to liturgy* to *liturgy to doctrine* is defective and that “worship requires certain practical, and ultimately doctrinal, norms” (*Ibid.*, 161).

Although it is true that liturgical actions are significant to our understanding of theology, it remains that theology still needs to act as a safeguard against the danger that the best-intended liturgical practices can still end up falling drastically short of Scriptural ideals. To use Wainwright's word, there is always the danger that "worship may get out of hand."⁴⁴ Alister McGrath summarizes the key issue. Reflecting on Kavanaugh's advocacy of primary theology over secondary theology, he writes: "This suggests that worship has the upper hand over theology. But what happens if liturgical development becomes irresponsible? Does theology have a role in limiting or criticizing liturgy?"⁴⁵

More importantly in relation to the Free Church tradition in general, and Adventist worship in particular, it is good to be reminded that the original Protestant challenge against the Medieval Church sprang from their conviction that Christian worship had lost its bearings. The Reformers were committed to have worship that was conformed to the Scripture because of human nature's tendency to miss what God considers acceptable. As John Calvin observed, the human heart "is a perpetual factory of idols."⁴⁶ Because of this, Protestants insist that *lex credendi* should establish and govern *lex orandi*.

Another theological issue is the question of *prima theologia*. An increasing number of liturgical theologians insist that Christians can in no way engage in pure primary liturgical theology. In their judgment it is exaggerated to claim that our

⁴⁴ Wainwright, 121.

⁴⁵ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 237.

⁴⁶ Jean Calvin, Ford Lewis Battles and John T McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, eds., 2 vols., (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 1.11.18 (1:108).

experience of God in the liturgical act can give us total direct access to the deepest wells of theology. Paul Bradshaw calls it “a highly romantic”⁴⁷ vision. As he succinctly puts it:

When Christians gather on a Sunday morning to worship, they do not come with their minds a *tabula rasa*. On the contrary, they come with their religious attitudes and expectations already formed by secondary theology, as a result of that catechesis that their particular ecclesiastical tradition has given them over the years.⁴⁸

In other words, what worshippers experience are conditioned by their beliefs/doctrines but also by the beliefs/doctrines already implicit in the liturgical act itself.⁴⁹

Maxwell E. Johnson also advocates that we need to ask ourselves “whether there is not something else which is even more primary than this liturgical act, some kind of *lex credendi* perhaps which comes to expression in, is continually nourished by, but, nevertheless, in some fundamental primordial way 'constitutes' the *lex orandi*?”⁵⁰ This means that we cannot claim to express theology through worship unless there is theology prior to worship.

Adventists can identify well with those concerns because, like other Christians associated with the Free Church, they do not see church tradition as a rule of faith.⁵¹ In

⁴⁷ Bradshaw, “Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology,” *Pacifica* 11(1998) quoted in Melanie C. Ross, *Evangelical versus Liturgical: Defying a Dichotomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 86.

⁴⁸ Bradshaw, *Pacifica*, 86.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁵⁰ Maxwell E. Johnson, in Paul Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks, eds., “Liturgy and Theology,” *Liturgy in Dialogue: Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 224.

⁵¹ It is quite a challenge to define the term “Free Church” since it represents a variety of Protestant persuasions, ranging from Baptists to Mennonites, from Nazarenes to Pentecostals. Free Churches have been referred to as “Believers Churches,” their adherents as “Nonconformists,” their system of belief and praxis “the old dissent.” James F. White traces Free Church worship varieties to their historical roots—Anabaptists, Separatist and the Puritan tradition, as well as the Frontier tradition. James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989),

her review of Free Church worship, Evelyn Underhill identifies “its Biblical emphasis, its revolt from ecclesiasticism and reassertion of simplicity, its passion for personal freedom.”⁵² Free Church worship, according to James F. White, has two distinctive characteristics: “First, such worship demands freedom to reform worship exclusively on the basis of scripture without any compulsion to dilute the purity of reformation by compromise with human traditions. Second, the ordering of worship is determined locally by each worshipping community.”⁵³ Consequently, Adventists consider it problematic to limit an entire understanding of worship to church tradition, no matter how rich and valuable it can be. A more adequate liturgical theology is required to understand their worship.⁵⁴ Hence my question: How can a liturgical theology be developed that makes sense of Adventist worship?

2.1.4 Liturgical Theology as a Methodology to Understand Adventist Worship

Traditionally, liturgical theology has been used to express, clarify and defend the value of traditional expressions of worship, whether Orthodox or Catholic. Such an approach raises immediate concerns for those in the Free Church tradition. Melanie Ross expresses those concerns as follows: “Free Church congregations are wary of any claims attempting to define “the” tradition of the ancients, “the” order of the Church, and “the” liturgical list which offers the world meaning.”⁵⁵ Given their Restorationist agenda,

79-93, 117-134, 171-191. See also Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 25-27; Graydon F. Snyder and Doreen M. McFarlane, *The People are Holy: The History and Theology of Free Church Worship* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 3-5.

⁵² Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), 298.

⁵³ James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 80

⁵⁴ Aune, *Worship I*, 47-48.

⁵⁵ Melanie Ross, “Joseph's Britches Revisited: Reflections on Method in Liturgical Theology,” *Worship*, 80.6 (2006): 535.

Adventists, like other members of the Free Church tradition, also look beyond the Church Fathers to what they perceive to be core liturgical features of New Testament faith. They believe in the restoring and reviving of beliefs and practices, which are more akin to primitive Christianity.

Given some of the important questions raised here, we are left with a dilemma: How can we best engage with liturgical theology, which has traditionally been used to explain and defend liturgical traditions, to examine the worship of a denomination that considers the Bible to be its only source of authority?⁵⁶

Or better, how can we understand the script of Adventist worship using liturgical theology lenses and to what extent? Like many before me, I am indebted to the methodological insights gained by Schmemmann in his exploration of liturgical theology.⁵⁷ Although, some of Schmemmann's emphasis on liturgy as the ontological condition of theology has been rightly criticized, it remains that his foundational method of approaching worship can significantly illuminate our understanding of Adventist worship practices. He outlined three critical steps in what he considered to be the basic approach to liturgical theology: 1) the establishment of liturgical facts; 2) the theological analysis of these facts; 3) the synthesis of the liturgical facts and their theological analysis. Generally, liturgical theologians have followed those basic steps set out by Schmemmann, even when they do not agree with his theological presuppositions.

The first step is to establish the liturgical facts. James White concurs with Schmemmann when he declares that “[o]ne of the best ways to determine what we mean by

⁵⁶ As early as 1847, James White stated that the Bible is “a perfect and complete revelation” and “our only rule of faith and practice.” James White, *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (Brunswick, ME: n.p., 1847), 13.

⁵⁷ Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*.

Christian worship is to describe the outward and visible forms of worship by Christians.”⁵⁸ The key element here is to thoroughly assess the concrete reality of any liturgical practice to understand correctly what is really taking place. Margaret Kelleher suggests that a foundational task of liturgical theologians is akin to that of the historians. “They must go first through a process of gathering data on liturgical data and then engage in an interpretative process.”⁵⁹ This cannot be done haphazardly. Aune cautions that we need to approach “historical research much more seriously in order to have a clearer *understanding* in depth of why and what we do in worship.”⁶⁰

Important questions that can be asked at this stage are: *Who are they that worship?* Lathrop puts it simply: “[i]n order “to have Church” a group of people must first gather.”⁶¹ We need to start with the people. “Liturgy is not just texts but what individuals and communities actually do.”⁶² People themselves are primary in our understanding of any worship tradition. This is particularly true for denominations in the Free Church tradition that do not rely primarily on liturgical texts, a common lectionary or the Church year to offer their worship to God.

So, in our understanding of Adventist worship, the people need to be our main focus. This means knowing their history, their self-perception, their identity formation as a distinct denomination. Among the fundamental questions that can also be asked at this

⁵⁸ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 23.

⁵⁹ Kelleher, “Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method” in Paul F. Bradshaw, and John Allyn Melloh, eds., *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 209.

⁶⁰ Aune, *Worship* 2, 143.

⁶¹ Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 87.

⁶² J. Frank Anderson, “Liturgy as Real Prayer for Real People” in Vogel *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, 76.

stage are: What do they actually do when they worship? Why do they worship in a particular way? Why do they worship on a particular day? What are the distinguishing characteristics of their liturgical assembly? What are the objects, symbols and gestures used to represent and enact their relationships among themselves and with God?

As Christopher Ellis explains, “[t]his is the step that takes worship seriously by respecting its specific and concrete reality, both in its historical development and in the contemporary life of the Church.”⁶³ In other words, what is needed here is to consider the essential role of worshippers, and finding significance in their actual practice of worship.

The aim here is to resist the impulse of rushing with idealistic notions of what Adventist worship should be like. As noted earlier, one of the weaknesses of Adventist theology has been its tendency to focus solely on how Adventist worship should be rather than looking at its past and current expressions in order to grasp its essence. Rather, the goal is to have a realistic look at what it is in its concrete expressions. Constant effort must be made to examine reality as it is. This approach helps us to appreciate more its distinct character.

The second step is to do the theological analysis of these facts. Dwight Vogel puts it this way: “Liturgical theology must deal with the liturgy and it must be theological in nature.”⁶⁴ The liturgical facts have to be interpreted theologically. This is what Wolterstorff and Chan call making the implicit explicit.⁶⁵ In other words, secondary theology endeavours as much as possible to explain the primary experience of corporate

⁶³ Ellis, 23.

⁶⁴ Dwight W. Vogel, “Liturgical Theology: A Conceptual Geography,” in Dwight W. Vogel (ed.), *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology*, 13.

⁶⁵ Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 12-18; Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 51.

worship. This is compatible with Kelleher's concept of the liturgical task "as a series of questions designed to transform an unknown into a known."⁶⁶ Johnson calls this method to liturgical theology a "bottom up" approach.⁶⁷

This stage is very delicate because it is tempting to resort quickly to systematic categories to interpret the whole event without spending enough time understanding the event itself.⁶⁸ James F. White asserts that the motivations and the ethos lying behind the act of worship must be explored.⁶⁹ What is needed here is to uncover the theological meaning of the worship experience(s), to understand how people express their faith and beliefs through their liturgical acts. We move here from the pure description of liturgical acts to theological interpretation.

Our main concern here is to reflect theologically on the liturgical data. At this stage, we want to focus on the theological meaning of the liturgical praxis and pay special attention to the pattern and shape in which the people gather to worship. Basic questions that we may ask at this stage are: When do people worship? What is the place and role of the singing, the sermon, the prayers, the Lord's Supper (and its frequency) in the worship service? What is the weight given to each element of the service and how is the whole service organised sequentially? Can we detect liturgical variations or changes over time?

⁶⁶ Margaret Kelleher, "Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method" in *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship*, Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, eds., first published in *Worship* 62 (1988), 2.

⁶⁷ Maxwell E. Johnson, *Praying and Believing in Early Christianity*, xi.

⁶⁸ Chan warns against missing this crucial step. Reflecting on work of Kavanagh and the need for proper liturgical theology methods, he writes: Making primary theology explicit is the task of liturgical theology. We should therefore not draw too sharp a distinction between primary and secondary theology. What the Church should guard against is a secondary theology that is done outside of the worshipping community, a theology that abstracts from and generalizes about the liturgy based on some "neutral" criteria. Chan, 51.

⁶⁹ White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 46.

What can those variations and changes tell us about the denomination's evolving theological convictions or commitments? Basically, the main question is: What does the liturgical act tell us about the people's understanding of God and of themselves as the body of Christ in the world? Here we are looking at what Schmemmann calls getting at the core structure of the liturgy to elucidate its theological meaning.

The third step for Schmemmann is the notion of "a theological synthesis."⁷⁰ At this stage, we contemplate how the whole thing (liturgy and theology) fit together. It is this synthesis of the liturgy and its theological reflection that bring to the fore the essential meaning of worship. It reveals the reality of the Church in the expression of its liturgical, theological and confessional dimension. Here is what Schmemmann describes as the deep recesses of the Church's faith and beliefs where Bible and tradition "become a living reality."⁷¹ Reflecting on Schmemmann, Christopher Ellis explains that the objective here is "to enable the theology implicit in liturgy to have a voice."⁷²

According to Schmemmann the task of this theological enterprise is to grasp the theology as revealed in and through the liturgy. The task of the liturgical theologian is not only to describe and interpret the *leitourgia* but also to defend the liturgically received vision and experience. Hence, the liturgy becomes in a way the final word on the Church and its theology. As noted earlier, this claim of liturgy's finality and dominance on theology as the source of theological reflection poses a challenge for those who do not share the same theological commitments. Hence despite Schmemmann's invaluable

⁷⁰ Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 17-18.

⁷¹ Schmemmann, *Theology and Liturgical Tradition*, 14.

⁷² Ellis, *Gathering*, 24.

contribution with his three step approach to understanding worship, I agree with Christopher Ellis that a fourth step is needed, “a stage in which we place the exposition of the faith of the worshipping community under broader theological scrutiny”⁷³ through other sources “such as creeds, confession of faith, analytical theology and especially, Scripture.”⁷⁴ It is by engaging this vast array of theological resources that we are in a position to have a clearer picture and a better platform to understand and evaluate worship.

Those four steps [step 1: establishing the liturgical facts; step 2: the theological analysis of those facts, step 3: synthesis of steps 1 and 2; step 4: broader theological analysis of steps 1-3] will constitute my basic method for understanding Adventist worship. A key Adventist liturgical practice, Sabbath-keeping, will serve as the organising principle in articulating this thesis. We conclude this chapter by briefly considering this aspect of the study.

2.1.5 Liturgical Time: Sabbath as an Organizing Principle

The language of time provides an essential foundation for understanding Christian worship because it conveys central aspects of the Christian faith. In his introduction to Christian worship, James F. White observes that “[t]here is no better place to begin our investigation of the basic structures of Christian worship than with an introduction to the way Christians use their time as a language through which to express their worship.”⁷⁵ As

⁷³ Ellis, *Gathering*, 24.

⁷⁴ He further explains that “[t]radition does not carry for the Free Churches the burden of authority which it would carry in Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches. Authority is found elsewhere — in Scripture, the missionary imperative, pastoral need and common-sense rationalism. Thus the *ordo*, or underlying principles, of evolving worship cannot carry the *lex credendi*. . . because the patterning of worship is subservient to other theological authorities.” Ellis, 24.

⁷⁵ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 52.

a response to God's redeeming action in Christ, Christian worship celebrates salvation history through the sanctification of time. "The observance of the week," according to Gordon W. Lathrop, "provides a patterning for Christian ritual, and at the same time it bears the deepest faith of the church and forms us in that faith."⁷⁶

Contrary to other Christians who celebrate Sunday as their day for worship, in celebration of Christ's resurrection, Adventists insist on the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath, as a day of rest and worship. As we shall see in more detail later, the Saturday assembly and cycle of the week form their basic Christian *ordo*. It informs the way they understand and structure their corporate worship.

The Sabbath expresses the meaning and experience of sacred time as a celebration of divine creatorship and redemptive love. As such, the Sabbath provides an essential foundation for understanding how Adventists understand, approach and practice Christian worship and giving attention to the experience and theological meaning of the Sabbath will provide an organizing principle for my study of Adventist worship.

With this in mind, we are now ready to turn to our first major section on Adventist worship- its history.

⁷⁶ Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 40

CHAPTER THREE

3 ADVENTIST WORSHIP: ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The liturgical question before us in this chapter is: what is our understanding of Adventist worship implicit in its liturgical acts? To answer that question, we will examine the historical development of Adventist worship. In so doing, we will also interpret those liturgical facts to uncover their theological meanings. We will pay special attention to the pattern and shape in which Adventists gather to worship because the way people worship reveals their understanding of God. Our aim will be to identify a number of general principles and values that control Adventist worship to orient us in developing a theology of worship.

Denominational worship cannot be divorced from its history. In order to understand the liturgical stance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the historical development of its worship must be considered. This section covers the historical development of Adventist worship from its beginnings in Millerite Adventism (1831-1844) to its transition into Sabbatarian Adventism (1844-1863) and consequent formalization into Seventh-day Adventism (1863-now). In that period of almost two centuries, we will identify key factors, with Sabbath-keeping at the centre that shaped Adventist worship as it moved from enthusiastic and spontaneous expressions of religiosity to one giving priority to standardized corporate practice and authority. It is hoped that this chapter will demonstrate how Adventist liturgical expressions were

shaped by internal and external processes as Adventism moved from being a movement to become a denomination.

3.1 ADVENTIST WORSHIP BEGINNINGS (1831-1844)

Modern Seventh-day Adventism finds its beginnings in the wake of America's greatest religious revival, known as the Second Great Awakening.¹ William Miller (1782-1849),² a lay-Baptist preacher, became convinced of the imminent return of Christ after years of diligent study of Bible prophecies. On the basis of his historicist interpretation of the 2,300 days prophecy of Daniel 8:14, Miller started preaching from 1831 that Christ would return in glory around 1843.

The Millerite movement, as it came to be referred to, shared a wide platform, drawing principally from Methodists, Baptists and the Christian Connection, members and ministers alike.³ Although each brought with them their theological particularities, they were all united in one unique doctrine- the imminent coming of Jesus Christ in glory.

¹ George Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999); Idem, *A Search for Identity: The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000); Edwin Scott Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974); Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977).

² On Miller's background, see David L. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850*, American Academy of Religion Studies in Religion, no. 38 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), chapters 1 and 2; George Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1993); Jonathan M. Butler, "The Making of a New Order: Millerism and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventism," in Numbers and Butler, eds., *The Disappointed*, 190. See also "From Millerism to Seventh-day Adventism: 'Boundlessness to Consolidation,'" *Church History*, 55 (1986): 50-64.

³ Everett Dick's study of the denominational affiliations of Millerite preachers reveals from a sample of 174 lecturers (whom he was able to identify denominationally) 44% were Methodist, 27% Baptist, 9% Congregational, 8% Christian Connection (Restorationist stream), 7% Presbyterian and several other denominations were represented by one or two lecturers as well. "William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844" (an unpublished manuscript, 1932, an extension of a 1930 PhD dissertation at the University of Wisconsin. Quoted by George Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 114. Since then published by Andrews University Press, 1994.

Their fellowship and mission originated from their understanding of what they viewed to be an impending eschatological event of unimaginable proportion. Interestingly, as we shall see later, a small number of Millerite believers started adopting a new liturgical practice while expectantly waiting for the Second Coming—seventh-day Sabbath-keeping.

3.1.1 Roots and Influences

Generally, Millerite worship retained the evangelical ethos of nineteenth-century America, more often than not characterized by a series of radical revisions of liturgical practices led by Charles G. Finney, a former Presbyterian revivalist turned Congregationalist. Three important aspects of Finney’s worship reforms can be mentioned here.⁴ First, he emphasised freedom and innovation over tradition, arguing that the Bible does not prescribe any particular styles. Second, he held that without innovations, the church would be impotent in a fast-changing age. This led him to contextualize worship by adapting it to its surrounding culture, removing all ‘unnecessary’ barriers to the audience. Third, and perhaps most importantly, he reversed the relationship between worship and evangelism. Christians, traditionally, had viewed evangelism as the by-product of worship. With Finney, evangelism took pre-eminence over worship as he turned worship services into evangelistic venues.

Millerites were also part of those liturgical revisions. More specifically, they tapped the currents of “populist” scriptural hermeneutics, millennial aspirations, and

⁴ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed., William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge: Harvard, 1960), 272-276; John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 179-200; Melanie C. Ross, *Evangelical versus Liturgical: Defying a Dichotomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 12-19; For a dramatic account of the issues raised by revivalism, see Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1965), 3-95; *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994).

revivalistic zeal that characterized their times. Those three factors, among others largely shaped their worship practices. We will briefly consider those three foundational factors before considering Millerite worship practices.

3.1.1.1 Populist Hermeneutics.

William Miller and his followers were products of their times. In the full-fledged democracy of the Jacksonian era, democratic ideals permeated American politics and religion as well. In those days, many had started adopting a "populist hermeneutics" that gave individuals the right to interpret the plain language of Scripture as it made sense to them.⁵ For many preachers, claims to expertise did not have to come necessarily through formal training. Hence, one did not need to be an expert in theology to preach radical new ideas. Faith, common sense and a good concordance were enough to discover unexposed Scriptural truths.⁶ Truth, however obscure, could be reached by the diligent use of reason. Traditions, formal theology, creeds and institutional control had no place of choice. Since Scripture was its own expositor, full understanding of its teachings and doctrines could be reached through attentive and prayerful study. This also meant that orthodoxy and orthopraxy were to be determined by Scripture, not by tradition.⁷

⁵ See for instance, Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁶ Thus, William Miller could write: "I determined to lay aside all my prepossessions, to thoroughly compare Scripture with Scripture, and to pursue its study in a regular and methodical manner. I commenced with Genesis, and read verse by verse, proceeding no faster than the meaning of the several passages should be so unfolded as to leave me free from embarrassment respecting any mysticisms or contradictions. Whenever I found anything obscure, my practice was to compare it with all collateral passages; and, by the help of Cruden, I examined all the texts of Scripture in which were found any of the prominent words contained in any obscure portion. Then, by letting every word have its proper bearing on the subject of the text, if my view of it harmonized with every collateral passage in the Bible, it ceased to be a difficulty." Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 69.

⁷ Ibid., 70-71. For a detailed analysis, see Jeff Crocombe, '*A Feast of Reason*': *The Roots of William Miller's Biblical Interpretation and its influence on the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, PhD Dissertation (St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland, 2011).

By following the commonly held understanding of Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5, 6, Miller's study of Daniel 8:14 ("Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed") led him to the conclusion that the last judgment would come and the earth be purified with fire at the Lord's coming around 1843. Miller's apocalyptic-eschatological vision fuelled his passion for working toward the conversion of souls, enabling individuals and communities "to meet their God in peace."⁸ Miller's agenda was evangelistic, not liturgical.

3.1.1.2 Millennial Expectations.

Another important element in nineteenth-century America was the impact of millennialism on American consciousness to the point that historians Ernest Sandeen and George Knight compare it to a "drinking stupor"⁹ and a "fever."¹⁰ There was a growing millennial expectation especially among Evangelicals, many of whom thought that the blessed millennium could be hastened and would be ushered in by the propagating of the gospel and the values of Christian civilization. Charles Finney, for instance, proclaimed in 1830 that if Christians united, the millennium could come within three months.¹¹ In contrast, Miller's insistence on the imminent cataclysmic divine intervention differed sharply with the prevalent postmillennial optimism. For Miller, Christ's Second Coming meant the imminent annihilation of the wicked and the catastrophic end of human civilization. Undoubtedly, Miller's premillennial vision of Christ's Second Coming

⁸ Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 328.

⁹ Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millennialism, 1800-1930* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1970), 50.

¹⁰ George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993).

¹¹ William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals: Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 130.

caused a major stir, especially that he dared to even fix an approximate date, 1843. The only hope for Christians, he claimed, laid in being revived; as for unbelievers, conversion was their only way out. This premillennial vision asked for a higher standard of spirituality and moral purity.

3.1.1.3 Revivalism.

The terms ‘revival’ or ‘revivalism’ in nineteenth-century America immediately suggests that Christianity, especially the Evangelical strand of it, was being revived. Yet, the use of those alternative terms indicates a nuanced interpretation of those religious experiences, hence the attempts to distinguish between "revival" and "revivalism." The former, it is argued should refer to the unplanned outbreak of religious fervor brought by the sovereign grace of God, the latter to a deliberately humanly-led way of securing the same intense spiritual results.¹²

Miller and his associates began their ministry at a time when evangelical religion and its agent, revivalism, already dominated the American religious landscape. As Timothy Smith, aptly puts it, "Miller appeared at the point when revival fires were bringing hopes for the Second Advent to feverish intensity."¹³ As America was reaching the mid nineteenth century, the shift from Calvinist to Arminian theologies was putting the individual at the centre in the conversion process, dislodging God's unilateral responsibility in salvation. Revivals and mass conversions were no longer seen as the surprising and sovereign work of God but as a matter of individual choice. Also, "new-

¹² See for instance, Ian Murray's *Revival and Revivalism, the Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism* (Edinburg: The Banner of Trust, 1994); Kathryn Teresa Long, *The Revival of 1857-58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1998); Irving H. Bartlett, *The American Mind in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967).

¹³ Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 228.

measure revivalism” assured that revival could be initiated and secured using the right techniques in contrast to the Calvinist understanding that emphasised God's exclusive role in fostering revival.

3.1.2 Basic Elements of Worship

The combination of popular hermeneutics, Millerite fever and incipient revivalism shaped the way Adventist believers viewed and practiced their faith. This undoubtedly affected the way they worshipped.

However, up to now, there is no full information on how Millerites conducted their worship services. Most reports focus on their preaching or lectures and the general atmosphere of their meetings but fall short of giving a detailed description of whole service events. Also, another important point needs to be remembered: Millerism was a movement among different denominations. Worship practices could vary from one denomination to another, even from one church to another. Moreover, Millerite preachers visited those churches according to invitation and had no control on church services, except for the sermon. Yet, we can still identify important elements of worship such as preaching, prayer, piety and music.

3.1.2.1 Bible Preaching.

Millerite Adventism originated from the study of the Bible. It was Miller's intense Bible studies that led him to preach that the Second Advent was near. It never occurred to him and all his associates that there could be any authority for doctrine and behaviour other than the Bible. Miller's conviction about the place of Scripture in preaching and Christian living is clear in a letter he wrote to one of his associates: “you must preach Bible; you must prove all things by Bible; you must talk Bible; you must exhort Bible;

you must pray Bible, and love Bible; and do all in your power to make others love Bible, too.”¹⁴

Millerites relied on the Bible with that firm conviction that the Bible could interpret itself. The general consensus was that preaching was not the sole prerogative of an educated clergy but the mandate of all those who felt called to herald the Second Advent. Scripture could be appropriated, interpreted and preached through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That kind of exegetical and kerygmatic optimism gave significant impetus to their movement.

Although, Miller was not known for his charisma, "people flocked to hear his undramatic but logical lectures or sermons.”¹⁵ For instance, after visiting a number of Miller's lectures, the editor of *The Fountain*, a temperance paper, mentions how “almost breathless silence . . . reigned throughout the immense throng for two or three hours at a time”¹⁶ as Miller presented his message. Another witness to Miller's preaching described him as “a serious, earnest man with a wonderful power of holding the attention of his audience and of bringing them round to his belief. He did not shout or rant the way so many revivalists do; he made his impression by his earnest manner and his serious way of addressing his listeners.”¹⁷

Silas Hawley, a Congregational minister, wrote from Groton, on the 10th of April 1840:

¹⁴ Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 100.

¹⁵ Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 119.

¹⁶ Isaac Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Yarmouth, ME: I. C. Wellcome, 1874), 248.

¹⁷ Cited in Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), 107, from a quote in Clara Endicott Sears, *Days of Delusion: A Strange Bit of History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), 117.

Mr. Miller has lectured in this and adjoining towns with marked success. His lectures have been succeeded by precious revivals of religion in all those places. No one can hear him five minutes without being convinced of his sincerity, and instructed by his reasoning, and information. All acknowledge his lectures to be replete with useful and interesting matter. His knowledge of Scripture is very extensive and minute; that of the prophecies, especially, surprisingly familiar. His application of the prophecies to the great events which have taken place in the natural and moral world is such, generally, as to produce conviction of their truth, and gain the ready assent of his hearers. We have reason to believe that the preaching or lecturing of Mr. Miller has been productive of great and extensive good. Revivals have followed in his train. He has been heard' with attention wherever he has been. . . . His Scripture explanations and illustrations are strikingly simple, natural, and forcible; and the great eagerness of the people to bear him has been manifested wherever he has preached.¹⁸

Several elements can be noticed here: Miller's preaching was (i) biblically-based, sincere, mainly directed to the intellect - people are "instructed" by Miller's "reasoning and information," (ii) effectively illustrated - "illustrations are strikingly simple, natural, and forcible", and (iii) applied to the contextual reality of his hearers, (iv) his exposition on prophecy was not for information but for transformation; (v) as a result, people experienced revival.

Examination of Millerites' preaching reveals the role of rationalistic expositions to secure conversion and revival as a preparation for the Second Advent. For instance, it was also not unusual for Millerites to open the floor for questions and clarifications after they had preached.¹⁹ This emphasis on rational proof distinguished Millerites from revivalists of their times who appealed much more often to emotions.²⁰

¹⁸ Lynn Record, quoted in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 137, and in Isaac Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message*, 74-75.

¹⁹ See for instance, *Signs of the Times*, February 1, 1841, 161; *Signs of the Times*, December 15, 1841, 141; *Signs of the Times*, July 27, 1842, 132; *Signs of the Times*, October 19, 1842, 38; *Signs of the Times*, September 14, 1842, 191.

²⁰ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 112.

On another level, Millerite preachers also interpreted the display of emotions as an indication of a salvific divine encounter. Miller and his associates frequently measured the success of their preaching by the visible impact it had on their hearers. Reports repeatedly focused on the number of individuals who would come forward for prayer²¹, or on how “some old, hardened rebels have been brought to plead for mercy”²², the manner in which a congregation went “weeping like children”²³, or reports of “a great excitement . . . a great breaking down, and much weeping,”²⁴ of “young converts, with tearful eyes, rejoicing in their first love”²⁵ Since evangelization was a driving ambition, conversion or the "born again" experience was considered fundamentally important. It was expected that those religious experiences be manifested tangibly, hence the preachers' emphasis on “evidence of sins forgiven [and] of regeneration.”²⁶

Despite their peculiar eschatological emphasis, and their use of charts and other visual aids to illustrate their preaching, Millerites were staunch Evangelicals when it came to matters of salvation.²⁷ Urgent appeals would normally end their presentations

²¹ Isaac Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message*, 80.

²² *Ibid.*, 64.

²³ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁵ *Signs of the Times*, August 24, 1842, 163.

²⁶ *Signs of the Times*, October 5, 1842, 22.

²⁷ See for instance James White's sermon appeals in *Life Incidents in Connection with the Great Advent Movement* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868), 1:78.

“warning men with all earnestness, and prayer, and entreaty, to turn unto the Lord, and prepare to meet him at his coming.”²⁸

In some cases, the “anxious seats,” one of Finney’s “new measures” were introduced.²⁹ Convicted of their spiritual condition, “the weeping penitents” would fill those seats “amidst the songs and exhortations of the saints and converts” to find spiritual release and peace with God in prayer.

Within the Millerite understanding, preaching was meant to inform the mind and stir the heart toward the convictions of sin. Their preaching had revival and conversion as an ultimate object.

3.1.2.2 Prayer.

Prayer also played an important role in Millerite meetings. Their preachers prayed and fasted to receive divine understanding, guidance and personal assurance. For instance, this is what Charles Fitch, a leader in the Millerite movement, wrote in 1840:

I beseech every minister of Jesus Christ, whose eye may rest on this page, to set his face, as did Daniel, to seek the Lord God by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes, until the Holy Ghost shall be sent to give him skill and understanding in the word of God; so that he no longer flatter the world with the cry of “peace and safety,” while sudden destruction is just upon them, “as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.”³⁰

Publications, like *Signs of the Times*, were released to “to promote revivals of religion, —prayer, —purity, —and entire consecration in the members of Christ’s

²⁸ *Signs of the Times*, August 24, 1842, 165.

²⁹ *Signs of the Times*, February 1, 1842, 168; *Signs of the Times*, July 13, 1842, 117; *Signs of the Times*, July 20, 1842, 125; *Signs of the Times*, October 19, 1842, 38; *Signs of the Times*, November 23, 1842, p.78; *Signs of the Times*, November 30, 1842, 87.

³⁰ Charles Fitch, “Letter to the Presbytery of Newark” in *The Glory of God in the Earth* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 34. See also, *Signs of the Times*, April 1, 1841, 5.

body.”³¹ They rejoiced when they found “about 30 or 40 men of different denominations, engaged with one accord in prayer, at about 11 o'clock in the day-time!”³² They exhorted believers to set “meetings for prayer, praise and exhortation, in different neighborhoods.”³³ They felt the obligation “to the most strenuous efforts, and the most fervent, importunate prayer for the universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ in this world.”³⁴

Millerites rejected the use of written prayers, opting instead for extempore prayers, more conducive to their earnest display of religious affections. Hence, this comment regarding some prayer meetings held in October 1842: “The prayer meetings morning and evening were well attended. The prayers of the brethren and sisters were fervent and feeling. Exhortations [were] warm and energetic; and brotherly love abounded.”³⁵

3.1.2.3 Singing.

Millerites gave full expression to their beliefs, longings and feelings through singing of dominantly Second Advent hymns.³⁶ As James White, recalls “in those days singing was our delight.”³⁷ Since originally the Millerite movement was

³¹ *Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1840, 13.

³² *Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1840, 14.

³³ *Signs of the Times*, June 1, 1840, 39.

³⁴ *Signs of the Times*, October 1, 1840, 100.

³⁵ *Signs of the Times*, October 19, 1842, 38.

³⁶ See Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, 44-45.

³⁷ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:104.

interdenominational, it is likely that they sang from the hymnals of their various denominations. But as time passed, they began holding their own meetings because of the increasing resistance and opposition to their apocalyptic messages. Consequently, the separation of the Millerites from their original churches prompted the Millerite leaders to compile and publish collections of hymns and spiritual songs.

There was a very democratic process in the compilation of hymns and spiritual songs, especially designed for their prayer meetings and conferences. Every believer had the opportunity to submit “appropriate hymns,”³⁸ on the condition that those were “soul-stirring”³⁹ and marked by diversity.⁴⁰ Millerites were in search of “old-time” revival religion, and considered “old-fashioned” hymns to be the best.⁴¹ Second Advent hymns had a place of choice in those new hymnals. Here is a typical stanza from one of the hymns:

*“How long, O Lord our Saviour,
Wilt Thou remain away?*

*Our hearts are growing weary
O when shall come the moment
When, brighter far than morn,
The sunshine of Thy glory
Shall on Thy people dawn?”*⁴²

The reading and the singing of hymns was common practice in Millerite circles. Usually, no musical instruments accompanied their meetings but their singing produced

³⁸ “Songs of Zion” in *Signs of the Times*, August 2, 1841, 72.

³⁹ “Millennial Musings” in *Signs of the Times*, October 1, 1841, 104.

⁴⁰ Joshua Himes, *Millennial Harp* (Boston, MA: Joshua V Himes, 1842), 2.

⁴¹ *Signs of the Times*, June 15, 1841, 48.

⁴² From the *Millennial Harp*, quoted in Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of William Miller and the Millerites* (Takoma Park, WA: Review and Herald, 1945), 121.

strong effects. Recollecting his introduction of a meeting in Litchfield, Maine, James White writes about marching down the centre aisle beating time on his Bible and holding “nearly a thousand persons in almost breathless silence” by singing “You Will See Your Lord a-Coming.” He continues: “It seemed to me that not a hand or foot moved in all the crowd before me till I had finished all the words of this lengthy melody. Many wept and the state of feeling was most favorable for the introduction of the grave subject for the evening.”⁴³

For the Millerites, the nearness of the Second Coming seemed so palpable that it exercised their deepest emotions. Bursts of joyful noise, animated singing could paradoxically lead to silence and tears. Singing especially expressed the certainty of their faith and articulated the sincerity of their hope.

3.1.2.4 Baptism and Communion.

Millerites baptised by immersion upon conversion and profession of faith.⁴⁴ Baptismal ceremonies were public and were most of the times conducted at nearby rivers.⁴⁵ Those were emotional moments since many felt that they were lingering on the shores of eternity. Again, with typical evangelical fervor, there are accounts that “many would return from the place weeping.”⁴⁶

⁴³ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1: 94-95.

⁴⁴ *Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1842, 51.

⁴⁵ *Signs of the Times*, October 5, 1842, 22.

⁴⁶ *Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1840, 13.

Alongside baptism, Millerites also practiced open communion which were held periodically.⁴⁷ All who had committed themselves to Christ could partake of the Lord's Supper, irrespective of their denominational affiliation. The Communion service, presided by ordained ministers, was experienced with the notion of commitment and service.⁴⁸ For Millerites, the communion service was a celebration and called forth their highest praise and devotion. Singing and spontaneous vocal outbursts would sometimes accompany communion services.⁴⁹

3.1.3 Towards Separation

As the time of Christ's expected return approached, more and more churches shut their doors to Millerite preachers. In consequence, Miller and his colleagues turned to new ways to gather Adventist believers and communicate their hope to those who wanted to hear it: conferences and camp meetings.

3.1.4 Conferences

According to *Signs of The Times* of 20th April 1842, conferences were designed "for the purpose of assembling Christians together to worship God . . . the principal object of the meeting is to awake sinners and purify Christians."⁵⁰ They clearly had a renewal and restorationist agenda as indicated in one of the reports of their session: "Our object in assembling at this time . . . is to revive and restore this ancient faith, to renew

⁴⁷ Charles Fitch, *Letters by Charles Fitch from the Midnight Cry*, March 14, 1844.

⁴⁸ See for instance, a report in *Signs of the Times*, December 14, 1842, 103.

⁴⁹ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:107.

⁵⁰ *Signs of the Times*, April 20, 1842, 21.

ancient landmarks, to “stand in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way in which our fathers walked and the martyrs found rest for their souls.”⁵¹

There are indications that the following pattern was generally followed:

*Reading and/or Singing of Hymns,*⁵² *sometimes accompanied.*⁵³
Reading of Scripture
Prayer
Mutual exhortation
*Lecture/Preaching/Discourse*⁵⁴
Altar Call
Praying

This order of worship was not inflexible.⁵⁵ Because of its anti-creedal and anti-liturgical posture, the Millerite movement gave priority to free-flow worship where spontaneity and improvisation was the way to meet God.

3.1.5 Camp Meetings

To cater to the increasing larger crowds, Miller and his associates turned to camp meetings, a common method used by other Christians.⁵⁶ Camp meetings differed from the regular church services in many ways. Instead of the typical church service, organised for the local community, camp meetings were generally a four-day interdenominational

⁵¹ *The First Report of the General Conference of Christians Expecting the Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ*; “Proceedings of the General Conference,” 12, Quoted in Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, 88-89.

⁵² James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:106.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1:106.

⁵⁴ *Signs of the Times*, December 1, 1841, 129; *Signs of the Times*, November 1, 1840, 115.

⁵⁵ *Signs of the Times*, August 2, 1841, 70.

⁵⁶ James F. White, *Protestant Worship*, 172.

event, held in open spaces that attracted large groups of people. Camp meetings normally culminated in a Communion service.

Millerite camp meetings were interdenominational events. Preachers and attendees came from various confessional backgrounds. In 1843 and 1844, 130 camp meetings were conducted all over New England, with attendance ranging sometimes between four thousand and ten thousand.⁵⁷ It is estimated that attendance at camp meetings between 1842 and 1844 exceeded half a million, i.e, approximately one out of every 35 Americans.⁵⁸

The objective of the camp meetings was “to wake up the slumbering in the churches and the careless sinner”⁵⁹ by the announcement of the imminent return of Christ and the soon coming judgment.⁶⁰ This emphasis on revival and evangelism in the context of imminent Parousia was typical of Millerite piety.⁶¹ The reports of the camp meetings in East Kingston⁶² and other places are quite revealing of how Millerites worshipped. Christians of all denominations assembled to meet God “in a thousand prayers and songs of praise . . . to worship him in the Spirit”⁶³ and participate in the Lord’s Supper.

⁵⁷ Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4:643-644.

⁵⁸ George Knight, *A Brief History*, 18.

⁵⁹ *Signs of the Times*, July 13, 1842, 116. Quoted in Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* 4:645.

⁶⁰ *Signs of the Times*, June 15, 1842, 88.

⁶¹ Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, 116.

⁶² *Signs of the Times*, July 13, 1842, 114-116.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 114.

According to the same report, “the meeting was conducted with great regularity and good order from beginning to end.”⁶⁴

According to Adventist historian, Leroy Froom, seven characteristics marked the camp meeting exercises- preaching, exhorting, praying, singing, the communion service, the offering, and the parting scene or ceremony. He further explains:

The preaching was dynamic and persuasive, and reached the hearts of people. The singing made the camp ring with its fervor, and enforced the oral message. The offerings of gold, silver, and other valuables amounted to one thousand dollars—a large sum for that time, when an average day's work netted only seventy-five cents. And the parting scene of these camps was unforgettable. United by the bonds of a common faith, and drawn together by a common hope in the soon coming of Christ, they formed a giant circle, hand clasping hand, in solemn leave-taking.⁶⁵

The attendees of camp meetings participated in emotionally expressive worship that expressed itself in different ways- from the weeping penitents coming to the altar for prayer to others falling on their knees seeking for prayer⁶⁶ and finding deliverance through the ardent prayers of fellow camp meeting attendees.⁶⁷

3.1.6 Crisis over Worship

Millerite leaders wanted their meetings to be earnest but orderly. Yet, the notion of ‘solemnity’ was severely disrupted as the expected time for Christ’s coming approached. Unbounded enthusiasm started causing disruptions to the point that “the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Leroy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, 4:646. See also 4:644-655. For a primary source, see *Signs of the Times*, October 26, 1842, 44.

⁶⁶ *Signs of the Times*, October 12, 1842, 28, 44.

⁶⁷ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:167-168.

movement's leaders published a list of regulations to keep their camp meetings orderly.⁶⁸ To the leaders' dismay, people were rolling on the floor with the struggles, exhibiting convulsions and kicking and screaming fits,⁶⁹ reminiscent of early Methodist camp meetings.⁷⁰ For some, the Bible became secondary as it was superseded by visions, dreams, revelations, hysterical fits, fanaticism and extravagances. Interestingly, Charles Finney, the renowned revivalist, held the opinion that it was Miller's teaching⁷¹ that was responsible for the "intense excitement, involving much that was wild and irrational."⁷² In retrospect, William Miller admitted:

Sometimes our meetings were distinguished by noise and confusion, and . . . it appeared to me more like Babel than a solemn assembly of penitents bowing in humble reverence before a holy God. I have often obtained more evidence of inward piety from a *kindling eye*, a *wet cheek*, and a *choked utterance*, than all the noise in Christendom.⁷³

Miller and his associates tried to walk the fine line between fervent restraint and unmeasured enthusiasm by harnessing a spirituality that could still be controlled. They viewed uninhabited enthusiasm as a sign of fanaticism but were powerless to hinder or

⁶⁸ George Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 103-105.

⁶⁹ Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow, eds., *Anglo-American Millennialism, from Milton to the Millerites* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2004), 188.

⁷⁰ See for instance, W. Strickland, ed., *The Autobiography of Peter Cartwright: The Backwoods Preacher* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1856), excerpts, 5, 9-10.

⁷¹ People's reactions to his preaching, were far from measured as reported in a New York newspaper: "The mourners or converts, of whom there was a very large number, threw themselves in the dust and dirt around the pulpit, and for nearly an hour, men and women were praying, singing, shouting, groaning, and weeping bitterly." *Evening Post for the Country* (New York), Oct 22, 1844, cited in Nichol, *Midnight Cry*, 219.

⁷² Charles Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1876), 370.

⁷³ William Miller, "Letter to Brethren," December 3, 1844, quoted in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 282. Italics in the original.

curb those intense religious excitements.⁷⁴ To the dismay of the organisers, this display of emotional feverishness became the main attraction of the camp meeting as it drew sympathizers, curious and onlookers. For the camp leaders, such exhibitions bore the stamp of pure religious fanaticism.⁷⁵

3.1.7 Final Separation

As the expected date approached and some Millerites set a precise date, October 22, 1844,⁷⁶ Millerites' zeal to argue their case brought new converts but also signaled an increasing negative reaction from other denominations and the public in general. Many were forced to choose between their church membership and Millerism. Those who opted to remain in their Millerite beliefs were barred from membership in their churches. In this context, Charles Fitch, a Millerite leader, preached in July 1843 a defining sermon, "Come out of Babylon,"⁷⁷ based on Revelation 18:1-5 and 14:8 and pushed the Millerite movement toward separatism that brought "a newly defined understanding of themselves

⁷⁴ James E. White, *Life Incidents*, 1:156-157.

⁷⁵ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:156-160; James White recollects Elder Plummer's exhortation at one camp meeting: "He stated, in the most solemn manner, that he had no objections to shouts of praise to God, over victories won in his name. But when persons had shouted "Glory to God" nine hundred and ninety-nine times, with no evidence of one victory gained, and had blistered their hands in striking them together with violence, he thought it was time for them to stop. But if they would not change their course, it was time for all who wished to be consistent Christians to withdraw their sympathy from them, and show their disapproval of their course by keeping entirely away from them" (158).

⁷⁶ This date was not set by William Miller but by Samuel Snow, a Millerite preacher, who through extensive study of Jewish festivals linked the day of atonement, Yom Kippur, and the exact date of Christ's return with his conclusion that the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 would come on the tenth day of the second month (see Lev. 23:37) of the present year. That day, according to the Karaite Jewish reckoning was October 22, 1844. For a detailed explanation of Samuel Snow's calculation, see Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, 84-100.

⁷⁷ Charles Fitch, "Come Out of Her, My People: A Sermon" (Rochester, NY: Joshua V. Himes, 1843).

as a community of the last days.”⁷⁸ This understanding was later intensified with the non-event of October 1844.

Having reviewed the Millerite background of Adventist worship, it is necessary to consider an important element that will later shape Adventist liturgical practices—the introduction of seventh day Sabbath-keeping.

3.1.8 The Sabbath among Millerites

Acceptance of the seventh day Sabbath among the Millerites originated from their contacts with Seventh Day Baptists. A Communion service held in a Christian Brethren meetinghouse was one of the surprising ways in which the Sabbath doctrine made its way into Millerites circle. It happened in the early months of 1844 in Washington, New Hampshire, where Frederick Wheeler was presiding over the service.⁷⁹ An ordained minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Wheeler had joined the ranks of itinerant Millerite preachers in 1842. In his sermon preceding the Lord’s Supper, Wheeler pointed out that “all persons confessing communion with Christ in such a service should be ready to follow Him, and obey God and keep His commandments in all things.”⁸⁰

Seated in the assembly was Rachel Oaks, a Seventh Day Baptist. Oaks later reminded Wheeler of his sermon and urged him to put his own words into practice by keeping the fourth commandment. Oaks further revealed to Wheeler that she almost interrupted his sermon: “I wanted to tell you that you would better set that communion

⁷⁸ Stephen D. O’Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), 108.

⁷⁹ *Review & Herald*, Oct. 4, 1906; *Review & Herald*, Feb. 21, 1918.

⁸⁰ F.A. Bartle to William Spicer (undated letter) in William A. Spicer, “Our First Minister,” *Review and Herald*, February 15, 1940. 8 and William A. Spicer, *Pioneer Days of the Advent Movement with Notes on Pioneer Workers and Early Experiences* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald), 122-123.

table back and put the cloth over it, until you begin to keep the commandments of God.”⁸¹ As later reported, that conversation made a strong impact on the Millerite preacher. F. A. Bartle, a neighbour of Wheeler, remembered: “Elder Wheeler told me that these words cut him deeper than anything that he had ever had spoken to him.”⁸² After giving much thought to the subject, Wheeler began to keep the Sabbath. Subsequently, other members of his congregation joined Wheeler in observing Saturday as their day of worship. The Sabbath doctrine had now united to the Advent message. The meetinghouse later became “the location of earliest Sabbathkeeping Millerite church that continues to this day as a Seventh-day Adventist church.”⁸³

This episode illustrates the growing influence of Seventh Day Baptist Sabbath teachings on some Millerites, to which we now turn briefly.

3.1.9 Seventh Day Baptist Influence

There are indications that Sabbath-keeping became a matter of contention among the Millerites in the early 1840s. The zeal with which Seventh Day Baptists shared their Sabbath teachings was greatly responsible for that situation. Seventh Day Baptists had until then been generally passive in sharing their convictions concerning the Sabbath. However, things took a dramatic turn following their 1841 General Conference session that concluded that God “required” them to vigorously promote their views.⁸⁴ As a result,

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Merlin D. Burt, *Adventist Pioneer Places: New York and New England* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 92.

⁸⁴ For primary sources and analysis, see Merlin D. Burt, “The Historical Background, Interconnected Development, and Integration of the Doctrines of the Sanctuary, the Sabbath, and Ellen G. White’s Role in Sabbatarian Adventism from 1844 to 1849,” PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2002), 25-55. See also, Michael W. Campbell, “Developments in the Relationship

the denomination's tract society began publishing and massively distributing Sabbath literature.

The aggressive promoting of the Sabbath by Seventh Day Baptists took different forms. For instance, in April 1842, B. Clark, a Seventh Day Baptist minister, tried introducing the Sabbath to Millerites through the columns of the *Signs of the Times*. The editors refused to publish the article, noting that “[w]e wish to have no controversy with “Seventh Day Baptists on the subject of the Sabbath.”⁸⁵ This editorial note most probably reflected the opinion of the majority. Millerite leaders, especially, were unwilling to let any subject distract their flock from their main focus, the imminent return of Christ.

Yet, Sabbath-keeping still made some progress among followers of William Miller. For instance, the *Sabbath Recorder*, a Seventh Day Baptist publication, reported in June 1844 “that considerable numbers of those who are looking for the speedy appearance of Christ have embraced the seventh day, and commencing observing it as the Sabbath.”⁸⁶ Millerite leaders did not share the same passion for the Sabbath. They considered it as “an unimportant side issue,”⁸⁷ a distraction on the eve of the Second Coming.

Two series of articles published in September 1844 in *The Midnight Cry* seem to indicate the growing frustration of Millerite leaders in regard to the infiltration of Seventh

between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-Day Adventists, 1844–1884,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2017, 195–212.

⁸⁵ *Signs of the Times*, April 6, 1842, 5.

⁸⁶ George B. Utter, “The Second Advent and the Sabbath,” *Sabbath Recorder*, June 13, 1844, 2.

⁸⁷ “The Sabbath in the New World” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 247.

Day Baptist teachings within their movement. In its 5 September issue, the editors of *The Midnight Cry* deplore that “many persons have their minds deeply exercised respecting the supposed obligation to observe the seventh day.”⁸⁸ “As believers in the speedy coming of Christ to introduce a perfect Sabbath” the editors insist that Adventists should have “no peculiar creed in relation to the observance of days.”⁸⁹ Then, in discussing the Sabbath controversy, the editorial makes this emphatic declaration: “*there is no particular portion of time which Christians are required by law to set apart as holy time.*”⁹⁰

The editorial of the 12 September expresses a continuing exasperation over the Sabbath controversy: “We love the seventh-day brethren and sisters, but we think they are trying to mend the old broken Jewish yoke, and put it on their necks, instead of standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free.”⁹¹ The editors of *The Midnight Cry* viewed Sabbath-keeping as the reintroduction of a form of legalism based on an erroneous understanding of the Christian message. However, some Millerites did not share that interpretation and would prove it by their acceptance and observance of the seventh-day Sabbath.

From what has been presented in the preceding paragraphs, it can be noted that Millerites were a diverse group, united in one doctrine: the imminent return of Christ in glory. The main reason why people came to Millerite meetings was to hear teachings on the Second Coming. Religious meetings centred on preaching. Other elements were secondary. Meetings were designed to move individuals to an experience of revival or

⁸⁸ “Lord’s Day”, *Midnight Cry*, September 5, 1844, 68.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 69. In italics in the original.

⁹¹ “Lord’s Day,” *Midnight Cry*, September 12, 1844, 76-77.

conversion. They were principally orientated to reaching other Christians as well as unbelievers rather than being directed toward God.

Their eschatological preaching blended evangelical fervor with a kind of rational approach to religion. They validated their beliefs not only by rational arguments but also by the sense of “God's influence and inspiration within the movement itself”⁹² by recourse to tangible evidences. God’s closeness was not only interpreted in term of the nearness of the *Parousia* but also through the outward spiritual indications that accompanied their worship.

3.2 ADVENTIST WORSHIP TRANSITION (1844-1863)

Distress and confusion ensued when Jesus did not come on October 22, 1844. The movement splintered into different camps in responding to that non-event. Mainstream Adventist leaders, following William Miller, continued to advocate Christ’s imminent return but revised the particulars of their calculations in various ways. One radical fringe group, the Spiritualizers, moved away from Miller’s literal principles of interpretation and claimed that Jesus had come spiritually on October 22, 1844, and that the millennial reign had started. Another splinter group held to the validity and eschatological significance of the chronology of the 1844 movement but gave a different meaning to the nature of the event, claiming that Christ had entered a new phase of His heavenly high priestly ministry.⁹³ That particular group subsequently became Sabbath keepers and years later organised themselves as Seventh-day Adventists.

⁹² O’Leary, 107.

⁹³ *Day Star Extra*, February 7, 1846, 37- 44. For primary sources and analysis, see Alberto Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages, 1844-1863: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1995); Merlin D. Burt, “The Historical Background, Interconnected Development, and Integration of the Doctrines of the

The doctrine of the Sabbath did not find substantial supporters among this group in the beginning. According to James White, one of the co-founders of Seventh-day Adventism, “the Sabbath cause did not advance with us but little up to 1849.”⁹⁴ But slowly, Sabbath-keeping gained ground in various places. Let us first note the development of Sabbath practice and thinking among this group.

3.2.1 Emergence of Sabbatarian Adventism

Thomas M. Preble, a Millerite preacher of Free Will Baptist background, was instrumental in influencing the small group of Adventists who believed that Christ had entered a new phase of as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary to accept the seventh-day Sabbath. The publication of his article about the Sabbath in the *Hope of Israel*, a Millerite periodical, on Feb. 28 1845 swayed the opinion of the Millerite group. Preble’s article was republished a month later as a pamphlet entitled *A Tract, Showing that the Seventh Day should be Observed as the Sabbath, Instead of the First Day*.⁹⁵ Preble’s argument can be summarized as follows: (1) the seventh-day sabbath is a perpetual sign between God and his people (refs.: Ex. 31:17, Ezek. 20:12); (2) the Sabbath maintains its continuing validity in the New Testament (refs.: Matthew 24:20; Mark 2:27, 28; Luke 23:56; Acts 13:42; Acts 14:13; Acts 17:2; Heb. 4:4); (3) there is a distinction between creation Sabbath and the ceremonial Sabbaths (Preble comments extensively on Colossians 2:14-17 ; (4) the change to Sunday was ecclesiastically not scripturally,

Sanctuary, the Sabbath, and Ellen G. White’s Role in Sabbatarian Adventism from 1844 to 1849,” PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2002).

⁹⁴ Review and Herald, Aug. 11 1853, 53. Quoted in The Sabbath in Scripture and History, 248.

⁹⁵ Thomas Preble, *A Tract, Showing That the Seventh Day should Be Observed as the Sabbath, Instead of the First Day; “According to the Commandment”* (Nasha, New Hampshire: Murray & Kimball, 1845).

motivated (Daniel 7:25 as predicting this change by the Papacy); (5) the Sabbath should be kept by faithful Millerites.

In essence, Preble adopts the basic teachings of Seventh-day Baptists in defense of Saturday observance but with an important difference. He now couches the Sabbath in an eschatological context, using (and misapplying) Miller's *Lecture on the Typical Sabbaths and Great Jubilee* (Miller was never a Sabbath-keeper) and urges its observance on fellow Millerites "believing it important for us to have the truth on all subjects, and especially those connected with the immediate coming of Christ."⁹⁶

Preble's contribution is significant in that he is the first Millerite minister to publish a defense of Sabbath observance, but also because he brings into unison what will become two most essential components of Seventh-day Adventist identity, Sabbath and the Second Coming. His writings had a determining effect on Joseph Bates, one of the co-founders of Seventh-day Adventism, and a champion of Sabbath-keeping.

3.2.2 Joseph Bates, the Sabbath Messenger

Adventist historians recognise Joseph Bates to be a key figure in promoting Sabbath-keeping and in enriching its theology within early Adventism. Arthur L. White calls him "the apostle of the Sabbath truth." LeRoy E. Froom labels him "the Sabbath herald" and C. Mervyn Maxwell calls him "the father of the Sabbath truth among Seventh-day Adventists."⁹⁷ It was after discovering Preble's article and tract and

⁹⁶ Thomas Preble, 3.

⁹⁷ Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1827-1862* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1985), 284, 30; LeRoy E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1971), 81; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell it to the World: the Story of Seventh-day Adventism*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1982), 76. Quoted in Sergio Becerra, "The Eschatological Elements of the Adventist Doctrine Of The Sabbath," unpublished paper presented at the 4th International Bible Conference of Adventists, Rome, June 11-21, 2018.

comparing them with the Bible that his “mind was made up to begin the fourth commandment.”⁹⁸ He was so captivated by the Sabbath truth that “the old believers never forgot how he would sit in the prayer and testimony meetings, and, clapping his hands joyfully, exclaim, “Oh, how I do love this Sabbath!”⁹⁹ For Bates, Sabbath was more than a biblical truth to defend; it was a religious experience to cherish.

Bates published a series of booklets in which he argued that the Sabbath was instituted at creation and ratified at Sinai. Further, he maintained that the Ten Commandments are a moral guide and rule for all mankind, and emphasised that God’s Law required the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Basically, Bates rehearsed the traditional Seventh Day Baptists’ interpretation of the fourth commandment. However, what made Bates’s contribution significant to the nascent Sabbatarian Advent movement was that he saw a connection between the Sanctuary, the Sabbath and eschatology, especially in the Book of Revelation. His study of Revelation 11:19 (“the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the Ark of the Covenant”) convinced him that the Decalogue, including the seventh-day Sabbath, had not been abolished and still required obedience. Texts like Revelation 14:12 (where the saints keep “the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus”) and Revelation 12:17 (where God’s people “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus”) further persuaded him that the Decalogue and by extension the seventh-day Sabbath were a perpetual sign for God’s true followers.¹⁰⁰ In Bates’ understanding, the seventh-day

⁹⁸ *Review and Herald*, Feb. 8, 1870, 54.

⁹⁹ Spicer, William A. *Pioneer Days of the Advent Movement with Notes on Pioneer Workers and Early Experiences*. Review & Herald Publ. Assn., 1941.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Bates, *The Seventh-day Sabbath, A Perpetual Sign...*, 2nd rev. ed. and enl. (Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), iii, quoted in, *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey (1845-1863)*

Sabbath was a scriptural command still binding on all Christians as taught in the Ten Commandments and those prophetic passages.¹⁰¹

Another key contribution from Bates was that he framed his understanding of the Sabbath in the context of the three angels' message of Revelation 14.¹⁰² He viewed those messages as sequential. The first two (the hour of God's judgment and the fall of Babylon, he argued, had been preached by the Millerites. He also argued that verse 12 ("Here is the patience of the saints, here are they that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus") was now being fulfilled by Sabbath-keeping Adventists.

Significantly, the doctrines of the Second Coming, Christ's high-priestly ministry and the Sabbath became the cornerstone upon which early Adventists built their theological structure and identity. Arguably, the Sabbath could be seen as the organising principle because it was the Sabbath gatherings, through the liturgical acts of singing, praying or preaching, that gave expression to their beliefs in the heavenly sanctuary and the Second Coming. It was the Sabbath that regulated their liturgical time and shaped their weekly worship experience. But how did they worship? We now turn to this subject.

by Frank B. Holbrook, ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1989), 43-45.

¹⁰¹ Sabbath-keeping Adventists forged their identity from such biblical texts. For instance, James White argued that "if the Ten Commandments are preserved in heaven, certainly they are not abolished on earth" James White, "The Third Angel's Message," *Present Truth*, April 1850, 68, quoted in *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey* (1845-1863), 45, and that "a change in dispensations has not broken, nor altered it." James White, "The Law of God, or the Ten Commandments," *Present Truth*, 4, quoted in *Doctrine of the Sanctuary*, 45. Thus, Sabbath-keeping Adventists saw themselves as the end-time remnant of Bible prophecy. Because of their literal adherence to the fourth commandment, they viewed themselves as God's representatives "who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus."

¹⁰² George Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 304-319; *A Search for Identity*, 64-81; Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 953-961.

3.2.3 Homes as Worship Centres

Literary sources on early Sabbatarian Adventist worship are scanty. Since they did not own church buildings and were few in number, Adventist worshippers customarily met in homes. Accounts of their worship experiences are at best anecdotal. Yet it seems clear that the shift from the large Millerite meetings to the intimate setting of the home affected the way they worshipped. Two kinds of worship experiences can be highlighted here. These were (1) the early Bible Conferences, and (2) Social Meetings.

3.2.3.1 Bible Conferences.

Most Sabbatarian believers lived far apart and did not have regular worship together. One of the first traces of corporate worship was the ‘Sabbath Conferences’, a series of meetings that took place between 1848 and 1850. Those meetings followed earlier conferences held by a nucleus of Sabbatarian Adventists during 1846-1847 that had already devoted a lot of time to Bible study and prayer in an effort to ground and harmonize their distinctive beliefs, especially the Second Advent, Sabbath and Sanctuary doctrines.¹⁰³

The Bible Conferences were intended to reach former Millerites with those newly discovered teachings. The first Bible Conference took place at Rocky Hill, Connecticut, April 20-24, 1848. Ellen White remembers:

Friday morning the brethren came in until we numbered about fifty. They were not all fully in the truth. Our meeting that day was very interesting. Brother Bates presented the commandments in a clear light, and their importance was urged home by powerful testimonies. The word had effect to establish those already in the truth, and to awaken those who were not fully decided.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Cited in Jerry Moon, “Sabbatarian Bible Conferences,” in *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014), 1111-1115.

¹⁰⁴ Ellen White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 108.

All Adventists, whether Sabbath-keeping or other former Millerites, did not share the same view on what was considered to be Bible truth. For instance, at the second conference in Volney, New York, there were thirty-five participants. According to Ellen White: “There were hardly two (who) agreed. Each was strenuous for his views, declaring that they were according to the Bible. All were anxious for an opportunity to advance their sentiments, or to preach to us.”¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, they had a Communion service during that meeting and yet even there they could not agree on how it should be practiced. In her recollection of that event, Ellen White writes: “And as we had the emblem of our dying Lord before us, and was about to commemorate his sufferings, Bro. A. arose and said he had no faith in what we were about to do; that the Sacrament was a continuation of the Passover, to be observed but once a year.”¹⁰⁶ Although Sabbath-keeping Adventists observed the Lord’s Supper, they were still deeply divided over its theology and practice. It is during that same period of searching for theological understanding through Bible Conferences that James White compiled and published the first Sabbatarian hymnal that consisted of 53 hymns.¹⁰⁷ His wife, Ellen, alludes to some elements of worship as she remembers those Bible Conferences:

We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be one in faith and doctrine. The Scriptures were opened with a sense of awe . . . Often we fasted . . . After earnest prayer . . . then we would again bow in prayer, and earnest supplications went up to heaven that God would help us . . . Many tears were shed . . . we assembled for worship, and presented the truth.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2 Vols. (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1860), 2:97; see also *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, 110.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ James White, *Hymns for Gods Peculiar People that Keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus* (Oswego, NY: Richard Oliphant, 1849). Interestingly, the fourth hymn was a theme on foot washing, indicating its importance and practice in the Communion service for Sabbatarian Adventists.

¹⁰⁸ Ellen White, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1922), 192.

From those little glimpses of the Bible Conferences and other events, we can deduce that Bible study, exhortation, prayer, singing and communion were part of early Sabbatarian worship.

3.2.3.2 Social Meetings.

In their early years, Adventists did not own church buildings. They “assembled for worship, and presented the truth to those who would come to hear, in private houses, in large kitchens, in barns, in groves, and in schoolhouses.”¹⁰⁹

The few Adventists had ministers who had been ordained by their previous denominations. Those ministers concentrated their efforts in opening new mission frontiers.¹¹⁰ How then did Adventists worship? In the absence of church buildings and settled pastors, early Adventists practiced what they called “social meetings,” an informal worship service, borrowed from Methodist practices,¹¹¹ where testimonies and words of encouragement were the predominant elements.

Sabbatarian Adventists considered it a privilege to meet with scattered fellow believers to encourage each other and express their heartfelt devotion to God. Fellowship in those occasional social meetings through songs, prayers, and the sharing of personal testimonies was considered an extraordinary blessing and an essential to their spiritual life.¹¹² Those occasional social meetings were a key element in sustaining their faith and spirituality.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2003), 26.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882), 298.

¹¹² A. Chapman, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 4, 1854.

¹¹³ Hoffer J., *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 2, 1861.

3.2.4 Vocal and Bodily Responses

One of the defining characteristics of Sabbatarian Adventist worship was its enthusiastic and emotional nature. They gathered with a sense of God's presence in their midst to which they responded with manifest fervor. Two modes of response can be identified here: shouts and prostrations.

3.2.4.1 Shouts.

Sabbath-keeping Adventists expressed their religious ardor with fervent shouts of exclamations of "Alleluias," "Glory" and "Praise the Lord" during preaching, testimonies, prayers and singing. Through shouting, they expressed the intensity of their religious experience and also exuded an awareness of God's abiding and validating presence in their midst. For them, their worship contrasted with the lukewarm "insipid piety" prevalent in regular denominations.¹¹⁴

Ellen White narrates one such experience in a letter written November 7, 1850:

Our conference at Topsham was one of deep interest. Twenty-eight were present; all took part in the meeting. Sunday the power of God came upon us like a mighty rushing wind. All arose upon their feet and praised God with a loud voice; it was something as it was when the foundation of the house of God was laid. The voice of weeping could not be told from the voice of shouting. It was a triumphant time; all were strengthened and refreshed. I never witnessed such a powerful time before.¹¹⁵

Shouts of joy accompanied their singing. In a letter to her friend, Arabella Hastings, Ellen White pointed out that "singing to the glory of God often drove the enemy, and shouting would beat him back and give us the victory."¹¹⁶ Complaining that

¹¹⁴ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:265.

¹¹⁵ Ellen White, *Letter* 28, 1850.

¹¹⁶ Ellen White, *Letter* 8, August 4, 1850.

“there was too little glorifying God in Israel and too little childlike simplicity,”¹¹⁷ she went on to write that singing and shouting were effective in spiritual warfare to give believers “the ascendancy above the powers of darkness.”¹¹⁸

The shouting often expressed a sense of spiritual release¹¹⁹ as a result of God’s special intervention during their meetings, especially in response to preaching.¹²⁰

3.2.4.2 Prostrations.

Another feature of their worship was prostration, or falling unconscious to the floor, especially during prayers. This is how Ellen White describes one instance where it happened during a miraculous healing:

Many prayers had been offered to God in my behalf, yet it pleased the Lord to try our faith. After others had prayed, Brother Henry [Nichols] commenced praying, and seemed much burdened, and with the power of God resting upon him, rose from his knees, came across the room, and laid his hands upon my head, saying, 'Sister Ellen, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole,' and fell back prostrated by the power of God. I believed that the work was of God, and the pain left me.¹²¹

Another early occurrence was in a meeting that took place in 1848 in Connecticut. Adventist believers were engaged in prayer. Ellen White describes it this way: “The spirit [sic] came and we had a powerful season. Brother and Sister Ralph were both laid prostrate and remained helpless for some time.”¹²²

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid; See also *Manuscript 5a*, July 1850.

¹¹⁹ Hiram Edson, *Review and Herald*, February 1851, 48.

¹²⁰ G. W. Holt, "From Bro. Holt," *Review and Herald*, February 5, 1857, 110; James White, *Review and Herald*, February 11, 1859.

¹²¹ Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:84.

¹²² *Letter 1*, 1848 (“To Brother and Sister Hastings,” May 29, 1848); For another instance of prostration, see Ellen White, *Letter 31*, 1850; James White to Ellen White, November 6, 1860.

James White considered such manifestations as tangible evidence that Sabbath-keeping Adventists were a peculiar people living under the principles of another Kingdom. They are of those “who have been imbued with the spirit of the Advent faith and hope, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have been partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.”¹²³ Hence, although few in numbers, Sabbatarian Adventists viewed themselves as an eschatological community where God’s rule, although partial and provisional, was being manifested in a distinct way.

Sabbath-Keeping Adventists did not adhere to a prescribed form of worship. Instead, they relied heavily on the continuous leading of the Holy Spirit in their decisions on how to worship each time they meet. That openness to the Holy Spirit would sometimes result in glossolalia,¹²⁴ “holy laughter”¹²⁵ and visions, especially in the case of Ellen White.¹²⁶

So far in our discussions, it has been observed that Sabbatarian Adventist worship retained the evangelical fervor of the Millerites but with the absence of church buildings

¹²³ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:265.

¹²⁴ Ellen White “Beloved Brethren, Scattered Abroad” *Present Truth*, December 1849. James White to My Dear Brother, Berlin, Connecticut, July 2, 1848. *Review and Herald*, August 19, 1851. For more details see, Arthur White, “Charismatic Experiences in Early Seventh-day Adventist History,” A Reprint of Twelve Articles Published in the *Review and Herald*, August 10, 17, 24, 1972; March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19, 26, and August 2, 9, 1973, accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/Charism-ALW.html> on; See for instance, Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White, Volume 1: The Early Years, 1827-1862* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985), 196, 198, 199. Adriel Chilson, “Pentecostalism in Early Adventism,” *Adventist Review* 169 (December 10, 1992), 18-19. William Fagal, “Tongues in Early Adventism,” *Adventists Affirm* 11 (Spring 1997), 26-34.

¹²⁵ Ellen G. White, “To Brother and Sister Howland,” August 15, 1850 (*Letter* 12, 1850).

¹²⁶ See especially Ellen White’s, *A Sketch of the Experiences and Views of Ellen G. White*, Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851.

and settled pastors, they experienced a freer flow of worship where the enthusiastic exercise of charismata remained predominant. They did not follow a fixed pattern but remained open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their worship of God.

Prayer, exhortation, testimonies and singing were considered as essentials but those elements of worship were not seen as ends in themselves. Their aim was to experience God's presence in their midst as they waited for Christ's coming.

3.3 ADVENTIST WORSHIP FORMALIZATION (1863-CURRENT PERIOD)

As time passed, Adventists found themselves struggling between their deep-seated identity as a “scattered remnant” waiting for the imminent *Parousia* and the necessity of organizing a fast-growing movement.¹²⁷ Yet, most early Adventists were against formal organisation. Many of them, including their leaders, had been expelled from their former denominations because of their adherence to the teachings of William Miller. As a result, they viewed church authority and church organisation with suspicion.¹²⁸ The only form of unity they envisaged was the distinctive doctrines they had in common, especially the imminent return of Christ, Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the seventh-day Sabbath. However, the Sabbatarian Adventist doctrinal system proved ineffective in bringing together a harmonious body of believers.

¹²⁷ See Jonathan Butler, “From Millerism to Seventh-day Adventism: “Boundlessness to Consolidation,” *Church History* 55 (1986): 50-64.

¹²⁸ See George Knight, ed., *1844 and the Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 87-99; George Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 141-158; George Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth: The Development of Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 28-47; Barry Oliver, *SDA Church Organization: Past, Present and Future*, PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1989).

3.3.1 Contributing Factors

Three major issues, all related to worship, threatened the burgeoning movement: (1) fanaticism among believers; (2) self-appointed preachers; and (3) their inability to legally hold church properties. Those factors together became a major catalyst in the process by which the Sabbatarian Adventist movement developed into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

3.3.1.1 *Fanaticism among Believers.*

Religious enthusiasm is always fertile ground for excesses and it happened very early with Sabbatarian Adventists. Of particular interest was a worship service held in Atkinson, Maine in 1845¹²⁹ where the leader of an Adventist meeting, Israel Dammon, was arrested for disturbing public peace, following complaints by neighbors. His trial was widely publicized¹³⁰ and led to Adventists being branded as fanatics. The transcript of the trial speaks of an “exceedingly noisy” meeting where people were all “talking at once, hollering at the top of their voices.”

That meeting involved a number of uncommon practices—re-baptism, visions, (brotherly) kissing, and “promiscuous,” mixed-gender foot washing. A witness, a local farmer testified of the fanatical excesses this way: “I have been young, and now am old, and of all the places I ever was in, I never saw such a confusion, not even in a drunken frolic.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ For more on the trial see: Frederick Hoyt, “We Lifted up Our Voices Like a Trumpet: Millerites in Portland, Maine,” *Spectrum* August 1987: 29-36; “Trial of Elder I. Dammon,” *Piscataquis Farmer*, March 7, 1845.

¹³⁰ Daily Eastern Augus, “The Horrors of Millerism: Trial of Israel Dammon,” *Tri-Weekly Argus*, March 14, 1845, 1. “The Fruits of Millerism,” *New York Observer*, March 22, 1845, 47; “The Horrors of Millerism,” *Ontario Repository*, March 26, 1845, 2.

¹³¹ James Rowe’s testimony in Frederick Hoyt, ed., “Trial of Elder I. Dammon,” *Piscataquis Farmer*, March 7, 1845, reprinted in *Spectrum* August 1987: 31.

James White and Ellen Harmon (White) were both present at that meeting¹³² but would later distance themselves from similar types of meetings that occasionally affected Adventist ranks. Their greatest worry was that some Sabbath-keeping Adventists had embraced the idea that religion consisted only in great excitement and noise. As a result, they were making impulse and emotion their guide rather than the Bible.¹³³

3.3.1.2 Self-Appointed Preachers.

However, the greatest danger was self-appointed preachers who went around Adventist congregations causing havoc among members. Some of them lacked ethical integrity while others held divergent doctrinal views.¹³⁴ “Gospel order and perfect union among the brethren, especially those who preach the Word,”¹³⁵ became an urgent necessity to prevent Adventist circles from becoming a “perfect Babylon.”¹³⁶

Increasingly, Adventist leaders pushed for “Gospel Order,” especially among Gospel ministers. Some of them lacked experience and wisdom¹³⁷ while others had great oratorical skills but lacked sanctification.¹³⁸ Their work, according to Ellen White could

¹³² For Ellen White’s account of the same event, see *Spiritual Gifts*, 2:32-45.

¹³³ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 2:12-24.

¹³⁴ *Review and Herald*, December 13, 1853.

¹³⁵ James White, *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1851.

¹³⁶ Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, December 6, 1853.

¹³⁷ Ellen White, *Early Writings*, 97.

¹³⁸ Arthur Lacey White, *Ellen White: Woman of Vision* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 74.

only result in confusion and disunion.¹³⁹ At stake was the integrity and sanctity of the preaching ministry.

3.3.1.3 Legal Holding of Secure Church Properties.

The most important factor that forced the move towards denominational status was the holding of church property—especially church buildings and the Adventist publishing house.¹⁴⁰ Because Sabbatarian Adventists had neither an official name nor corporate existence, they could not hold property or legally own any asset. Those assets had been registered in the names of individuals. Yet, their Millerite experience had warned them that such an arrangement involved great danger, because some former adherents that had chapels built on their land had legally claimed it as theirs when they became disenfranchised from the movement.¹⁴¹ Yet, there was strong opposition to the idea of having a denominational name.¹⁴² James White opposed the idea, by pointing to the fact that as long as “we are stewards of our Lord’s goods here in the hand of the enemy, it is our duty to conform to the laws of the land to the faithful performance of our stewardship, as long as human laws do not oppose divine laws.”¹⁴³ He further used a key hermeneutical principle by adding, “We believed it safe to be governed by the following RULE. All means, which according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth,

¹³⁹ Ibid., 74, 100.

¹⁴⁰ *Review and Herald*, December 4, 1855.

¹⁴¹ *Review and Herald*, February 26, 1880.

¹⁴² *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1860.

¹⁴³ *Review and Herald*, February 26, 1860.

and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed.”¹⁴⁴ With that declaration, White placed himself on the same platform as Anglican Richard Hooker who centuries earlier had argued that the Church is free to order its life to all issues not definitely settled in the Bible.

Finally, in October 1860, Sabbath-keeping Adventists officially approved to call themselves Seventh-day Adventists.”¹⁴⁵ In October 1861, Michigan Conference was organised, as the first conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. On May 21, 1863, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was formed and the movement became an official organisation.

3.3.2 Free-Flow Worship

Official organisation did not significantly alter the way in which Adventists worshipped. They kept gathering in (1) social meetings, to which they later added (2) quarterly meetings and (3) camp meetings to minister more effectively to their growing numbers. We now briefly turn our attention to these three forms of worship.

3.3.2.1 Social Meetings.

Social meetings, or testimony meetings, continued to be the basic form of worship amongst early Seventh-day Adventists who viewed such gatherings as an absolute priority.¹⁴⁶ For instance, in an article in the *Review*, parents were urged “to make the social meeting of the highest interest to the children.”¹⁴⁷ Another article in that same

¹⁴⁴ *Review and Herald*, February 26, 1860.

¹⁴⁵ Arthur Lacey White, 78.

¹⁴⁶ *Signs of the Times*, September 4, 1893.

¹⁴⁷ *Review and Herald*, April 14, 1885.

publication described the true Adventist believer as someone who regularly attends social meetings.¹⁴⁸

What were the worship elements and the spiritual tone of those social meetings? Uriah Smith, a longtime editor of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, described the social meeting in this way:

A meeting characterized by spirited and soul cheering testimonies, the beaming eye, the voice of praise, the earnest and stirring exhortation, and often the falling tear- scenes in which faith and love flame up anew, where believers recounted their experiences, praised the Lord, and in some cases confessed their wrongs.¹⁴⁹

Although not exhaustive in itself, Smith's description opens a window into the nature of those social meetings. We note four important elements:

1. Testimonies (the sharing of one's Christian experience to encourage others).
2. Voice of praise (probably referring to or including singing).
3. Exhortation or words of encouragement (not a sermon).
4. Mutual confessions (denoting the importance of true Christian brotherhood and mutual accountability).

We note here that Smith misses an important component of the social meetings—prayer. We also note that Smith's description emphasises the deep emotional component of those meetings. But most importantly, we note the aim of those meetings: a time where “faith and love flame up anew,” continuing the Adventist revival agenda.

Social meetings abounded with expressions of gratitude and worship to God. They were fully participatory and probably followed this pattern:

- *Hymn*

¹⁴⁸ *Review and Herald*, June 2, 1891, par. 12; See also *Letter 7*, 1883; See also *Early Writings*, 114-118.

¹⁴⁹ Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald*, May 23, 1865.

- *Scripture Reading*
- *Opening Prayer*
- *The Praise of God through testimonies and probably acclamations.*¹⁵⁰

Meetings were a blend of order and spontaneity. Short testimonies were a distinct feature of those meetings.¹⁵¹ Brevity was cherished while “old, dry, stale testimonies and prayers”¹⁵² were considered to be a nuisance and out of place.¹⁵³ The rationale behind this was that “when one person takes up an undue proportion of the time, he is depriving someone else of his privilege to speak in meeting, and is giving an entirely wrong mold to the service.”¹⁵⁴ The aim was to allow maximum participation. The basic pattern of the meeting was simple and focused on glorifying God, expressed particularly in thanks and praise. Their fundamental movement of response to God in worship was the celebration and exultation of God.

Social meetings were often marked by enthusiasm and a deep sense of God’s presence.¹⁵⁵ The success of the meetings was often measured by its visible impact, indicated by expressions such as, “the good Spirit of the Lord was there,”¹⁵⁶ “[t]he Holy

¹⁵⁰ *Review and Herald*, July 22, 1902, 18.

¹⁵¹ *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, March 25, 1858, 152; *Signs of the Times*, October 20, 1890, 522; *Testimonies to the Church* 4:70; *Review and Herald*, February 19, 1889; *Review and Herald* October 22, 1889; *Review and Herald* July 21, 1891.

¹⁵² *Letter* 118, 1896, 5. “To Addie and May Walling,” November 17, 1896); 9 *Manuscript Releases* 99.

¹⁵³ *Testimonies to the Church*, 4:70; see also *Review and Herald*, October 22, 1889.

¹⁵⁴ *Review and Herald*, October 22, 1889.

¹⁵⁵ See for instance, Elias Goodwin, “Monthly Meetings in N.Y.,” *Review and Herald*, March 6, 1866.

¹⁵⁶ *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, November 12, 1861, 190.

Spirit was copiously poured on the people,”¹⁵⁷ “we all felt that the Lord was present in Spirit and power,”¹⁵⁸ “[t]he Spirit of the Lord was manifested in a most marked manner,”¹⁵⁹ “[t]here is deep moving of the Spirit of God.”¹⁶⁰ The climactic outcome was when they had a real melting season¹⁶¹ that would sometimes include rejoicing in the Lord, tears of gratitude¹⁶² and sometimes healing.¹⁶³ We find those elements mentioned in a letter written by Ellen White to her sons Willie and Edson in 1872 where she mentions the miraculous healing of their father James in a worship meeting:

We have been engaged in earnest prayer before God about two hours . . . The presence of God seemed to be in our midst . . . We made the case of your father a special subject of our prayers . . . The blessing and power of God rested upon your father and mother. We both fell to the floor. Your father, as he rose upon his feet to praise God, could not stand. The blessing of God rested upon him with such remarkable power. The angels of God seemed all around us. The awful, glorious presence of God was in our midst. Elder Loughborough felt the power of God all through his body. The room seemed holy . . . The praise of God was in our hearts and upon our lips. We shouted the high praises of God.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁷ *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, June 28, 1864, 33.

¹⁵⁸ *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, February 11, 1862, 85.

¹⁵⁹ *5 Manuscript Releases*, 233.

¹⁶⁰ *Letter 34-1889*.

¹⁶¹ *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, November 12, 1861, 190.

¹⁶² *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, June 28, 1864, 33.

¹⁶³ *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, February 11, 1862, 85.

¹⁶⁴ *Letter 20, 1872. 21 Manuscript Releases 240*.

Social meetings were also a time of worship where hearts were often touched and confessions were made to God and to each other.¹⁶⁵ Those worship experiences often culminated in restored relationships and “cheerful witnesses for Christ.”¹⁶⁶

Social meetings were so prized that they were sometimes combined with the study of the Word in Sabbath School,¹⁶⁷ and after a “preaching service”¹⁶⁸ whenever those occurred. The sermon did not seem to be the high point of early Seventh-day Adventist worship. The common understanding was that “the preaching service should generally be short, so that an opportunity may be given to those who love God to express their gratitude and adoration.”¹⁶⁹ The Lord’s Supper also sometimes followed social meetings.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ *Manuscript 18*, 1889, 5. (Diary, February 23, 1889.); 9 *Manuscript Releases* 93; *Review and Herald*, April 19, 1887.

¹⁶⁶ *Review and Herald*, April 19, 1887; *Review and Herald*, July 21, 1891.

¹⁶⁷ *Review and Herald*, December 2, 1884.

¹⁶⁸ *Review and Herald*, February 10, 1885; *Sign of the Times*, March 16, 1882; *Manuscript 37*, 1892.

¹⁶⁹ *Sign of the Times* June 6, 1895; see also *Manuscript 32a*, 1894, (Untitled Manuscript, July 30, 1894) 9 *Manuscript Releases* 96.

¹⁷⁰ *Sign of the Times* April 22, 1880, Art. B, par. 1; *Letter 21*, 1880, 2. (To James White, April 15, 1880.) 9 *Manuscript Releases* 97; *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, October 28, 1862; *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, November 6, 1880; *General Conference Bulletin*, June 4, 1913; *General Conference Bulletin*, May 18, 1909.

Those testimony meetings were also conducted in other circumstances: in train coaches when travelling long distances,¹⁷¹ during evangelistic meetings,¹⁷² revival meetings,¹⁷³ camp meetings,¹⁷⁴ and the General Conference sessions.¹⁷⁵

The fact that time was set apart at international meetings like the General Conference where matters of mission, theology and administration were discussed is indicative of its importance among early Adventists. The order of the service at those sessions seems to have been as follows:

- *Scripture Reading*
- *Season of Prayer*
- *Brief Exhortation based on the Scripture reading.*
- *Social meeting with words of Praise and Confession*
- *Another Brief Exhortation*¹⁷⁶

It seems from the evidence examined that social meetings did not follow a rigid order but contained some distinguishing features, such as prayer(s), exhortations, song, and most importantly spontaneous testimonies. The meetings were quite informal and

¹⁷¹ *Review and Herald*, February 17, 1885; *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 16, 1899.

¹⁷² *Manuscript Releases*, No.1196.

¹⁷³ *Manuscript Releases*, No. 475.

¹⁷⁴ *Sign of the Times*, May 17, 1883; *Letter 1*-1875; *Manuscript 22*-1885.11; *Letter 31*-1899; *Letter 42*-1894.2; *Manuscript 9*-1895; *The Retirement Years* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1990), 37.

¹⁷⁵ For instance, at the General Conference session of 1893, we have the following mentions of social meetings being held: *General Conference Daily Bulletin* January 31, 1893, 56; *General Conference Daily Bulletin* February 24, 1893, 378; *General Conference Daily Bulletin* February 28, 1893; *General Conference Daily Bulletin* March 6, 1893, 488; *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, May 27, 1858, 13.

¹⁷⁶ *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 22, 1897.

highly participative in nature, as members would rise and speak briefly of their personal faith and experience in the Lord.¹⁷⁷ The main purpose of those testimonies was to provide an opportunity for members to express freely their praise and thanksgiving, to confess their sins and to renew their commitment to God and the cause of His Church.

3.3.2.2 Quarterly Meetings.

In addition to the social meetings, Adventists in the 1860s began another type of worship service called the “quarterly meetings,” borrowed from a common Methodist practice. Those meetings consisted of a gathering of Adventists from a given geographic area¹⁷⁸ that convened every three months, a new way for Adventists to mark a sense of liturgical time, apart from the weekly Sabbath.

Their primary purpose was mutual encouragement, transaction of church business and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The meetings normally started on a Friday afternoon and extended through Sunday. A minister or in his absence an ordained local elder presided over the meetings.

Those meetings did not take place haphazardly. Announcements were made in the *Review* stating the dates, the time, the venue and the name of the minister in charge of leading worship. Members were urged to attend for their spiritual benefit.

With time, Adventist leaders found it necessary to standardize the meetings. Hence, in June 1877, the *Review* reported the General Conference Committee’s recommendations for quarterly meetings.¹⁷⁹ They were to take place the first Saturday

¹⁷⁷ *Manuscript*, 17-1889.

¹⁷⁸ *The Signs of the Times*, November 15, 1877, 351.20; *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, February 12, 1884, 102.

¹⁷⁹ *Review and Herald*, June 7, 1877.

and Sunday in January, April, July, and October. Strict attendance was to be taken. Those absent would receive a visit or a letter from the church leaders. A minister or in his absence an ordained local church elder was to celebrate the ordinances. Sabbath evening or Sunday morning, members would bring their contribution and give a report on their literature outreach activities.¹⁸⁰

Thus, discipleship and accountability were taken very seriously. Like the Methodist class meeting, the aim was to “watch on one another with love.” Hence, the quarterly meeting was designed to keep every person connected to the rest of the Church and ensure that that no one was forgotten or left behind. To be an Adventist was not just a matter of professing certain doctrines. It also involved commitment to God, connection to the church and the support of its mission. Most significantly, those meetings were a time to express genuine Christian love,¹⁸¹ especially through partaking of the Lord’s Supper.¹⁸²

3.3.2.3 *Camp Meetings.*

Adventist camp meetings were religious gatherings held for a number of days, usually in a rural setting. Those meetings had a unifying factor and spiritual influence for the few scattered believers to such an extent that Ellen White called them “a spiritual feast.”¹⁸³ Like the Millerite camp meetings, Sabbatarian camp meetings had in view the revival of church members and the conversion of non-Adventist visitors.

¹⁸⁰ For more examples of Quarterly meetings, see *The Adventist Review, and Sabbath Herald*, February 12, 1884, 102, and *The Signs of the Times*, January 28, 1889, 58.

¹⁸¹ See for instance a recollection of Adventist hospitality surrounding quarterly meetings in Luella B. Priddy, “Stories of a Pioneer Church,” *The Youth’s Instructor*, January 19, 1926.

¹⁸² *Manuscript*, 180-1898.

¹⁸³ *The Bible Echo*, January 8, 1894.

Adventists were at first reluctant to organise camp meetings because of its potential for disorder. However, they tried their first camp meeting (which they termed a convocation meeting)¹⁸⁴ September 19 to 22, 1867 in Johnstown Center, Wisconsin.¹⁸⁵ Reporting on the event, Uriah Smith, the editor of the *Review*, mentioned that the convocation started with a social meeting followed by preaching by James White, after which his wife Ellen gave her testimony “with freedom and power.” The afternoon followed the same sequence: social meeting, preaching services, and testimony from Ellen White.

According to Smith, “the meeting in the evening was one of unusual solemnity and power. Sister White bore her testimony with great freedom. Many were in tears, and the pent-up emotions of the people found audible utterance in various parts of the congregation.”¹⁸⁶ The meetings continued in that same spirit “characterized by a tender, melting spirit,” during which many wept with tears of joy and relief, confessed their backsliding and had their faith restored. People confessed that they had “no business on hand during the four days of the meeting but to worship God.”¹⁸⁷

The success of those meetings led the General Conference to recommend the holding of a general camp meeting annually at the time of the church’s administration sessions.¹⁸⁸ In 1869, the General Conference recommended that state conferences

¹⁸⁴ *Review and Herald*, October 1, 1867.

¹⁸⁵ *Review and Herald*, September 24, 1867.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Apparently, no communion service was conducted during that first camp meeting. However, there was an ordination service Saturday afternoon and a baptismal service the next day where twelve individuals were baptised.

¹⁸⁸ *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1868.

organise all future camp meetings. From that time until today, camp meetings have been a regular feature of Adventism worldwide.

The general pattern for the camp meeting was to have meetings from six in the morning to ten at night. The daily program was filled with preaching, Bible studies and lectures on issues like health and temperance.¹⁸⁹ However, the social meetings still occupied a special place in the heart of attendees.

Christians of other denominations also attended the camp meetings held by Adventists.¹⁹⁰ One of them, Revd. A. H. Quint, a regular attendee to Adventist camp meetings, shared his impression of an Adventist camp meeting in the Boston periodical *The Congregationalist*.¹⁹¹

In great detail Revd. Quint's identifies the key elements of a preaching service during that camp meeting. He mentions the "wild, weird, touching songs of the Advent people," sang "to perfection" by the whole congregation, followed by *extemporaneous prayer* by a minister with "fiery earnestness" asking for the power of the Holy Spirit over the preacher, intensely pleading for the one who "is not much of a preacher . . . only an earthen vessel, and nothing but poor crockery at that." Then Revd. Quint mentions the *second song*, an old Christian hymn sung by the whole congregation, not in a "boisterous, but mild" manner. Next follows the sermon, "bold, direct, and plain." His account does

¹⁸⁹ *Review and Herald*, September 18, 1879; *Biography of E. G. White*, 3:145.

¹⁹⁰ *Review and Herald*, October 1, 1867; *Manuscript* 158, 1899; *Manuscript* 191, 1907; *Loma Linda Messages*, 121; *Manuscript* 176, 1905; *Letter* 31, 1900.

¹⁹¹ A. H. Quint, *The Congregationalist* September 9, 1867 quoted in Isaac Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message* (Yarmouth, ME: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1874), 636-637.

not also mention the social meetings, or testimony services, a regular feature of Adventists' camp meetings¹⁹² that would normally follow the sermon.

He also describes the worshippers, a people who “are tremendously in earnest . . . who know the language of the prophecies by heart . . . [holding] the belief that in a few years, at the farthest, the trumpet shall sound; that most of those now living shall see the Lord coming out of the skies.”¹⁹³

Although convinced that “some of their peculiar views did not seem well judged; their Scripture not always well applied; their experience not always well regulated,” Revd. Quint recognises the “intense convictions and zeal” lying under the “Advent peculiarity.” For him, it is “a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus, an implicit reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit, and a simple Christian experience.”

He further notes that those Adventists ignored the creeds but had an excellent knowledge of the Bible. Again, he observes how one Adventist leader claimed that Adventists were not Trinitarian or Unitarian yet finds the people expressing Trinitarian faith in their prayers as they “addressed the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit in prayer, apparently as freely as the Father.”

Revd. Quint's impartial account not only sheds light on how Adventists worshipped during camp meetings but also opens a window into the soul of Adventist spirituality and formative beliefs. Their faith was seeking understanding but their fervor for God could not be mistaken.

¹⁹² See for instance, 21 *Manuscript Releases* 432.1; 3 *BIO*, 145; *Letter* 1-1875.44; *Letter* 25a-1889.1; *Manuscript* 22-1885.11; *Manuscript* 9-1895.1.

¹⁹³ Wellcome, 637.

3.3.3 A Major Turning Point: The Indiana Worship Experiment

One momentous event that has shaped and continues to shape the popular Adventist understanding of worship is what transpired at camp meetings in Indiana in 1900. What happened during those camp meetings has been considered by some to be “the most divisive episode in the history of our worship practices”¹⁹⁴ and by others as “still deeply imbedded in the Adventist psyche.”¹⁹⁵

The meetings involved an explosive cocktail of theological heresies and liturgical novelties. Basically, it was an Adventist holiness revivalistic movement that got out of control. Its proponents described it as the “cleansing message” while its opponents derogatively termed it the “Holy Flesh Movement.”¹⁹⁶

The movement had its origins in the late 1880s when Adventism had been shaken by a renewed emphasis on the message of justification by faith¹⁹⁷ after years of emphasis on Adventist distinctive doctrines. With that renewed emphasis on Christ’s righteousness came also a renewed emphasis on victorious Christian living that, according to its main proponent Albion Ballenger, would come through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. His

¹⁹⁴ Andre Reis, “Ellen White and Music, With the Special Attention with the Music on the Indiana Camp Meetings of 1900,” Paper presented at Andrews University Worship Conference on February 25, 2015.

¹⁹⁵ Arthur Patrick (c. 1999), “Later Adventist Worship, Ellen White and the Holy Spirit: Further Historical Perspectives,” *Spiritual Discernment Conference*, accessed September 19, 2017, <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/>.

¹⁹⁶ For the historical background, see Gary Land, “At the Edge of Holiness: Seventh-day Adventism Receives the Holy Ghost, 1892-1900,” *Fides et Historia*, vol. XXXIII (Summer/Fall 2001), 13-30. C.W Edwards and G. Land, A.F Ballenger, *Adventism and American Christianity* (MI: Andrews University Press, 2000).

¹⁹⁷ George Knight, *A.T. Jones: Point Man on Adventism Charismatic Frontier* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011); George R. Knight, *Angry Saints: Tensions and Possibilities in the Adventist Struggle Over Righteousness by Faith* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1989); Whidden Woodrow, *W. E. J. Waggoner: From the Physician of Good News to Agent of Division* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008).

teachings were undoubtedly influenced by the writings of Holiness writers at a time when Pentecostalism was on the rise in America.¹⁹⁸

Beginning in 1897 and continuing for two consecutive years, one message rang out in local churches and camp meetings: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” Ballenger firmly believed and strongly advocated that a baptism of the Holy Spirit would not only bring victory over all sin but would also give power for witnessing and “salvation from sickness.”¹⁹⁹

As if this introduction of perfectionistic teaching were not enough, another group of ministers in Indiana, led by their Conference President, R. S. Donnell and Conference evangelist, S. S. Davis, started teaching in 1899 that Christ attained “holy flesh” like that of Adam before the Fall as He prayed victoriously in the garden of Gethsemane, the night he was betrayed. They claimed it was the duty of true believers to go through the same experience to attain sinless perfection and immortal bodies ready for translation at Christ’s soon return.²⁰⁰ To enhance the impact of their perfectionistic teachings, they felt at liberty to introduce liturgical practices previously foreign to Adventism.

A number of innovations were introduced. The first of these was to change the music used in congregational worship. The newly published [1899] Evangelical songbook “Garden of Spices” replaced the official “The Seventh-day Adventist Hymn

¹⁹⁸ See Adventist historian, Gary Land, *At the Edge of Holiness*, 26-28.

¹⁹⁹ Albion F. Ballenger, “The Loud Cry, Sermon by A.F Ballenger,” *The Daily Bulletin of the General Conference*, February 23, 1899.

²⁰⁰ S. S. Davis, *The Two Adams: And their Relation to the Two Covenants* (Longansport, ID: L.F. Elliott, 1898); R. S. Donnell, *What I Taught in Indiana* (Wagga Wagga, Australia: S. R. Buckley, 1992. 5.25. William H. Grotheer, Collection, “William H. Grotheer Collection,” Box. 5 FLD 18 (Berrien Springs, MI: Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University).

and Tune Book.”²⁰¹ The second innovation was the instruments they used. Whereas Adventists mostly sang *a cappella* (sometimes accompanied by a small organ), the innovators introduced a wide range of music instruments: “a big drum, two tambourines, a big bass fiddle, two small fiddles, a flute and two cornets, and an organ,”²⁰² reminiscent of the Salvation Army. The sheer number and volume of those instruments completely overpowered congregational and choir singing.²⁰³ One witness later recalled how the choir “worked themselves up to a high pitch of excitement by the use of musical instruments . . . until they became really hysterical . . . fairly shaking as though they had the palsy.”²⁰⁴ Shouts of “Amen” and “Praise the Lord,” “Glory to God” accompanied the service.²⁰⁵ In essence, the music was a conduit to facilitate the “Garden of Gethsemane” experience.

Yet, the biggest and most fundamental problem was not the music. It was the teachings. Commenting on the teachings, Stephen Haskell, a visiting Adventist guest preacher and church leader, points out that they were “a mixture of truth and error with much excitement and music.”²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Interestingly, promoters of the “Garden experience” used the denominational hymnal only when the two senior church leaders in attendance, Stephen Haskell and A.J Breed, would preach, a clear indication that the shift from the Adventist hymnbook to the Evangelical songbook might have met some resistance or reticence from the church officials.

²⁰² Hattie Haskell, “Letter to Sara McInterfer,” September 17, 1900. Stephen Haskell gives a slightly different account: “an organ, one bass viol, three fiddles, two flutes, three tambourines, three horns, and a big bass drum...” See, “S. N. Haskell to EGW,” September 25, 1900; *Biography of E. G. White*, 5:102.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁰⁴ Burton Wade account to A. L. White, January 12, 1962, accessed September 17, 2017, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/music.html#5>.

²⁰⁵ Hattie Haskell, “Letter to Sara McInterfer,” September 17, 1900.

²⁰⁶ Ellen White, *Biography of E. G. White*, 5:102.

This necessitated a third innovation: improvised raucous worship. The wife of Stephen Haskell, Hattie Haskell, describes the Sabbath service, as follows:

Last Sabbath they (Indiana ministers) took the early meeting also the 11:00 o'clock hour, and called them front to the altar as they call the little fence they have around the pulpit. The poor sheep came flocking up until they were on the ground three rows deep. The ministers kept up their shouting and, shall I call it yelling . . . Finally, they had a season of prayer, then they got up and began shouting, "Praise the Lord," "Glory" etc., falling on one another's neck and kissing and shaking hands, keeping their music going with the noise, until many of them looked almost crazy.²⁰⁷

Liturgical innovation seems to have been the order of the day. Another witness, G.A Roberts, remembered years later:

The followers of this doctrine would gather in the cleared basement of the church, and a large number of them would dance in a large circle, shouting and lifting up their hands. The children would be placed upon boxes or barrels, and they too would shout and lift up their hands. In their church services, they would preach and shout and pray until someone from the congregation would fall unconscious from his seat. One or two men would be walking up and down the aisles watching for just this demonstration, and would lay hold of the person who had fallen literally dragging him up the aisle and placing him on the rostrum. Then a number, perhaps a dozen, would gather about the prostrate form; some shouting, some singing, and some praying, all at the same time. Finally, the individual would revive, and he was then counted among the faithful who had passed through the Garden.²⁰⁸

The problem was serious enough to warrant Ellen White's return from Australia to confront the issue head on. Addressing the General Conference in 1901, she plainly stated that the "holy flesh" teaching was "an error" fueled by presumption and the Enemy.²⁰⁹ Not only did Ellen White speak and write vigorously against the Holy Flesh heresy,²¹⁰ she also denounced the worship style that accompanied it. In White's view, the

²⁰⁷ Hattie Haskell, "Letter to Ellen White," September 10, 1900.

²⁰⁸ G. A. Roberts, "The Holy Flesh Movement," June 11, 1923.

²⁰⁹ Ellen G. White, Regarding the Movement in Indiana, *General Conference Bulletin*, April 23, 1901, 419-422.

²¹⁰ For Ellen White's argument against the Holy Flesh, see *Selected Messages*, 2:31-39.

Holy Flesh movement was theologically, liturgically, and also missiologically wrong. She insisted:

The manner in which the meetings in Indiana have been carried on, with noise and confusion, does not commend them to thoughtful, intelligent minds. There is nothing in these demonstrations which will convince the world that we have the truth. Mere noise and shouting are no evidence of sanctification, or of the descent of the Holy Spirit. Your wild demonstrations create only disgust in the minds of unbelievers. The fewer of such demonstrations there are, the better it will be for the actors and for the people in general.²¹¹

No wonder, because of her strong influence and stark condemnation of the high emotionalism at the Indiana camp meetings, and her warning that the same would happen in the future,²¹² Seventh-day Adventists have become extremely cautious regarding uninhibited exuberance in worship. They gradually started moving toward a more restrained form of worship, facing the dilemma of maintaining a revival agenda while being deeply suspicious of overt emotions. It appears that the aspiration for “healthy enthusiasm,”²¹³ where both head and heart are engaged, began to slowly favour the intellect over the emotions.

3.3.4 The Emergence of an Order of Service

The official organisation of the Adventist movement into a denomination seems to have gradually altered its worship ethos. With the ongoing construction of new church buildings, an increasing number of professional clergy and a more visible denominational structure, Adventists increasingly took the path of ecclesiastical conformity. Adventists still kept the social meetings, quarterly meetings and camp meetings but the earlier

²¹¹ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 2:5.

²¹² Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 2:16-17, 36, 38.

²¹³ Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, 2:16.

tolerance for boundless enthusiasm slowly gave way to a more temperate style of worship. Greater caution started being exercised, especially through the determining influence of Ellen White who increasingly warned against the harm and danger of man-induced excitement,²¹⁴ affirming that God's work appeals to the "senses and reason of men and women."²¹⁵ Hence as late as 1908, she wrote:

In this stage of our history we must be very careful to guard against everything that savors of fanaticism and disorder. We must guard against all peculiar exercises that would be likely to stir up the minds of unbelievers', and lead them to think that as a people we are led by impulse, and delight in noise and confusion, accompanied by eccentricities of action. Such experiences will come to us from time to time. Let us give no place to strange exercisings, which really take the mind away from the deep movings of the Holy Spirit. God's work is ever characterized by calmness and dignity.²¹⁶

Whereas in 1850, Ellen White was calling for shouting to beat the enemy,²¹⁷ more than half a century later, she was urging restraint, appealing to "calmness and dignity."²¹⁸ A more cognitive form of worship steadily displaced the emotional and enthusiastic form of worship, much embraced by early Adventism. Such a move in Adventist worship practices has been noted variously.²¹⁹ Many factors seem to have contributed to such a

²¹⁴ *Manuscript* 11, 1850 (Dec. 25); *Letter* 8, 1860 (June 11); *Letter* 14, 1861 (c. 1861), published in *Signs of the Times*, May 19, 1890; *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1896.

²¹⁵ Ellen G. White, "Sermon at Ashfield, Australia camp meeting," Nov. 3, 1894 (*Manuscript* 49, 1894). See also 1901, 421, published in *Selected Messages*, 2:35.

²¹⁶ Ellen G. White to Elder S. N. Haskell, *Letter* 338, 1908 (N&V. 26), published in *Selected Messages*, 2:42.

²¹⁷ Ellen White, *Letter* 8, August 4, 1850.

²¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Letter* 85, 1889.

²¹⁹ Murlin Burt, "Ellen G. White and Religious Enthusiasm in Early Adventist Experience," in Appendix B, *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts: Volume 1*; Theodore N. Levetrov, *Early Adventist Worship, 1845-1900s in Worship*; Ronald D. Graybill, "Enthusiasm in Early Adventist Worship," *Ministry*, October 1991, 10-12; James Michael Wilson, "Enthusiasm and Charismatic Manifestations in Sabbatarian Adventism with applications for Seventh-day Adventist Church of the Late Twentieth Century," DMin Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1995); Arthur Patrick (c. 1999). "Early Adventist worship, Ellen White and the Holy Spirit: Preliminary Historical Perspectives." *Spiritual*

shift, including: (1) a changing American cultural and religious background, (2) a natural process of upward social mobility caused by church members becoming increasingly educated, and seeking respectability, (3) doctrinal arguments eclipsing living experience, (4) an institutionalizing process through the establishment of a denomination, and (5) the constant fear of religious and theological fanaticism.

Adventist church historian, Mervyn Maxwell suggests that a typical formal three-hymn congregational worship service²²⁰ existed in the 1880s, consisting of:

- *Hymn*
- *Pastoral Prayer*
- *Scriptures*
- *Hymn*
- *Sermon*
- *Hymn*
- *Benediction*

However, the clearest indication on how most Adventists worship at the turn of the century is depicted by H. M. J. Richards in his book *Church Order*.

3.3.4.1 Church Order, H. M. J. Richards.

Written in 1906 by an Adventist minister from Colorado, Halbert M. J. Richards, the book *Church Order*²²¹ can be considered as the most reliable source in understanding

Discernment Conference, accessed September 18, 2017, <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/discern/holyspirit.htm> and <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/discern/flesh.htm>.

²²⁰ Mervyn Maxwell, 1962, Center of Adventist Research Center, Andrews University, File DF 2119, No. 23. He argues that this order of worship is inferred from Ellen White's comment in *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:492-494.

²²¹ H. M. J. Richards, *Church Order and Its Divine Origin and Importance* (Denver, CO: Colorado Tract Society, 1906), accessed at the Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University.

Adventist worship in the 1900s. This publication is particularly significant because it offers a good description of Adventist worship as commonly practiced by Adventist churches in the early 1900s.

Richards makes it clear in his introduction to the “usual order of religious services” that “[t]he Seventh-day Adventist Church has no creed but the **Bible**. It has **no ritual**. Its services are conducted with **simplicity**.”²²² This introductory caveat seems to indicate at least three things: (1) an Adventist espousal of the Free Church understanding of worship where the plain reading of the Bible, not creeds, is understood as foundational to worship; (2) a defense against possible accusations of creeping ritualism into the church; (3) a strong preference for simplicity in worship, understood as more compatible with the core of the Gospel message.

Richards goes on to describe the typical order of service as follows:

The minister enters the pulpit and kneels for a few moments in silent prayer to God. All the people bow their heads and unite with their minister in silent prayer, imploring the Divine blessing upon the services of the hour. Then the minister announces the opening hymn, then all stand and join in the singing. After this the minister and all the people kneel in prayer, while he leads them in a public extemporaneous prayer of moderate length and appropriate to the needs of the people and the subject of the sermon. Usually a second hymn is then sung, and the sermon follows this. The service is concluded by another hymn sung by the entire congregation, after which the benediction is pronounced by the minister.²²³

In spite of Richards’ emphasis on the avoidance of ritualism, it is clear from the above description that Adventist worship had an ordered sequence where the minister and the congregation were expected to behave in a certain way to offer proper worship to God. The three essential elements of Adventist worship, prayers, sermon and songs, are

²²² H. M. J. Richards, *Church Order*, 64. Note that the words in bold are in the original.

²²³ H. M. J. Richards, *Church Order*, 64-65.

mentioned but this time clearly arranged sequentially. Adventist worship had taken this shape:

- *Silent Prayer for the Holy Spirit*
- *Opening hymn*
- *Pastoral Prayer*
- *Hymn*
- *Sermon*
- *Closing Hymn*
- *Benediction*

The above outline shows a significant change- the disappearance of Scripture reading from the service order. This change did not mean the cancellation of Bible reading from Adventist liturgy. The Bible was most probably read before the sermon. However, the absence of Scripture reading as a rubric in the order of service points to an ongoing reality of Adventist worship: Scripture reading is not seen as a high point in Adventist liturgy, the sermon is. Even with the reintroduction of Scripture reading, with the first publication of the *Adventist Church Manual* in 1932, M.B Cady, wrote in 1936: “there seemingly is a listless indifference manifest by many during the time allotted to this reading.”²²⁴ By 1943, Taylor G. Bunch’s was asking the question: “Are Scripture Readings Out of Date?,” observing: “The chief complaint against Scripture readings is that they take too much time.”²²⁵ More recently, Donald Rhoads, expressed similar concerns:

²²⁴ M. B. Cady, “Magnifying the Scripture Lesson,” *Ministry*, February 1936, 8.

²²⁵ Taylor G. Bunch, “Are Scripture Readings Out of Date?” *Ministry*, May 1943, 23.

How, then, do Seventh-day Adventists justify our own common practice of “Scripture reading” consisting of two or three verses that take up perhaps thirty seconds, and then preaching for up to sixty minutes? How can we be “people of the Book” while treating Scripture reading as incidental, one of the “preliminaries” to worship? How is it that we who claim the Bible as “our only rule of faith and practice” so often use it in worship only in bits and pieces?²²⁶

It is important to recognise that, contrary to many denominations, the overall majority of Adventist congregations do not use a lectionary and Scripture reading is not determined by the church but by the preacher of the day. Scripture reading is not often seen as a liturgical act in its own right but as a prelude to or a launching pad into the sermon. It is clear that the Word preached, not the Word read seems to be more central to Adventist worship.

In his work, Richards also conveys the essence of liturgical freedom. Faithful to the Free-Church tradition, Richards points out that there was room for flexibility in the Adventist liturgy:

The order is sometimes varied by the introduction of special music, such as sacred solos, duets, quartets or anthems; and occasionally by the introduction of a short-Scripture reading at some time before the sermon; and at times a short prayer is introduced after the sermon before the service and the benediction at the close are [sic] never omitted when an ordained minister conducts the service.²²⁷

The most obvious change was the addition of special music, such as sacred solos, duets, quartets or anthems and the addition of musical instruments into corporate worship.

The following is an outline of this kind of alternate service:

- *Silent Prayer for the Holy Spirit*
- *Opening hymn*
- *Pastoral Prayer*

²²⁶ Donald Rhoads, “The Word in Worship: Giving God's Word A Prominent Place in Worship,” *Ministry*, January 1998, 18.

²²⁷ H. M. J. Richards, *Church Order*, 65.

- *Scripture Reading*
- *Special Music*
- *Sermon*
- *Prayer*
- *Closing Hymn*
- *Benediction*

It is important to observe that Richards calls such a service a “Preaching Service”²²⁸ to underline the increasing centrality of preaching in Adventist worship. It is also interesting to note that the only time Richards becomes slightly prescriptive in tone, is when he mentions that announcements are to be made either before the sermon or preferably before the opening prayer.²²⁹ Richards also highlights another crucial point: “The benediction is pronounced by ministers only.”²³⁰ In their absence, local elders or a designated “brother” would offer the closing prayer.²³¹

From Richard’s description, it seems evident that a discernable pattern was emerging in Adventist worship with prayer, preaching and singing as the primary components of the worship service, comparable to other Free Church services. Parameters for who was to do what in worship were also clearly spelled out. This indicates that the culture of informality and spontaneity, once very present in Adventist worship, was diminishing. The order in which those elements took place is considered important, indicating a formalizing process. Another observation that can be made at this point is that the order of service described by Richards in 1906 is quite similar to most

²²⁸ H. M. J. Richards, *Church Order*, 66.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

Adventist worship all over the world today, indicating the solidification and standardization of a liturgical tradition.

This consistency in worship practices over the years can be traced back to the introduction of the official and widely used *Church Manual*, to which we now turn our attention.

3.3.4.2 Church Manual.

The production of a handbook for church governance had been in Adventist discussions for a while even before they became a denomination. Many had previously written on the need for “Gospel Order” or church organisation.²³² The first serious attempt at writing a *Church Manual* was made in 1882²³³ but was rejected for fear it would constitute a human attempt to control things, sidelining the leading of the Spirit, and ultimately replacing the Bible with a creed.²³⁴ It would take half a century for those fears to be alleviated. The Church finally issued an official Seventh-day Adventist

²³² James White, “Gospel Order,” *Review and Herald*, December 20, 1853, 188-189; J. B. Frisbie, “Church Order,” *Review and Herald*, January 9, 1855, 153-155; J. H. Waggoner, *The Church: Its Organization, Ordinances, and Discipline* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1886), 15-16; J. N. Loughborough, *The Church: Its Organization, Order, and Discipline* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1907), 66-71.

²³³ For a brief history of the *Church Manual* see, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 15-16; Neufeld, Don F., and Donald Ernest Mansell, eds. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996), 368-369; Gilbert Valentine, “The Stop-Start Journey on the Road to a Church Manual, Part I” *Ministry Magazine*, April 1999, 14-19.

²³⁴ See G. I. Butler article enumerating the delegates’ views in *Review and Herald*, 60:745, November 27, 1883. For further analysis see Brendan Pratt, “Functional structures in the local Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and New Zealand: A paradigm for renewal,” M.Th. thesis (Australia: Avondale College (2004), 83-86; and Gerard Damsteege, “Have Adventists abandoned the Biblical model of leadership for the local church?” in Samuel Koranteng-Pipim (ed.), *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005), 654–61.

Church Manual in 1932. The rationale for it was that “both the Bible and experience teach that order and system are necessary in carrying on the work of the church.”²³⁵

The *Church Manual* of 1932 states that the worship “is held for worshipping the Lord” and that it is “usually and properly the occasion for preaching or Bible study.”²³⁶ It also specifies that an ordained minister in active service is the one to lead worship. In his absence, the elders or their designee have charge. Interestingly, the social meeting that had been for many years the main way to conduct worship had now become an option.²³⁷

The 1932 *Church Manual* stresses the need for reverence and decorum in conducting worship. When pointing to the order of service, it stresses, as did Richards years before, that “it has never been our custom to prescribe a set form or order for public worship.”²³⁸ The 1932 *Church Manual* further adds: “A short order of service is usually better suited to the real spirit of worship. Long preliminaries should be avoided. Thus, more time can be given to the study of the word of God.”²³⁹

Instead of seeing the worship service as a whole, where every element is important, the 1932 *Church Manual* (and all subsequent Church Manuals) implicitly separates the service between “preliminaries” and the sermon, suggesting that preaching occupies a dominant role. This is in contrast with what Ellen White, one of the denomination’s founders, wrote nearly 40 years earlier, i.e., “the preaching service should generally be short, so that an opportunity may be given to those who love God to express

²³⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual*, 1932, 5.

²³⁶ *Church Manual*, 1932, 151.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

their gratitude and adoration.”²⁴⁰ This indicates that instead of being predominantly a praise-oriented service, saturated with testimonies, Adventist worship had become a Word-centred worship, where the focus was mainly on the proclamation of Scripture. This illustrates a move from the emotional to the cognitive. The worshipper’s encounter with God was no longer predominantly associated with jubilant praise but with an exposition of the Bible.

Like H. M. J. Richards’ 1906 book, the 1932 *Church Manual* suggests two orders of service that are quoted and compared in the table below:

Order of Worship	Shorter Order of Worship
<i>Organ Prelude</i>	
<i>Doxology</i>	
<i>Invocation</i>	
<i>Announcements</i>	
<i>Scripture Reading</i>	<i>Hymn</i>
<i>Hymn</i>	<i>Scripture Reading</i>
<i>Prayer</i>	<i>Prayer</i>
<i>Offertory</i>	<i>Offering and Announcements</i>
<i>Hymn or Special Song</i>	<i>Hymn or Special Song</i>
<i>Sermon</i>	<i>Sermon</i>
<i>Hymn</i>	<i>Hymn</i>
<i>Benediction</i>	<i>Benediction</i>
<i>Congregation Seated for a few Moments of Silent Prayer*</i>	<i>Congregation Seated for Silent Prayer*</i>
<i>Organ Postlude</i>	

In the footnote to the order of service, the *Church Manual* makes this illuminating comment about what worshippers should do before and after church service. Quietness and decorum are emphasised:

The following commendable custom prevails in many of our churches: As the members of the congregation come into the church auditorium, before the opening of the service, they quietly take their places in the pews, and bow the head for a moment in silent prayer, after which they sit in quiet meditation or read the Word until the service begins.

²⁴⁰ *Signs of the Times*, June 6, 1895, par. 3; see also *Manuscript 32a*, 1894, 2. (Untitled Manuscript, July 30, 1894.) 9 *Manuscript Releases* 96.1.

After the benediction the congregation resume their seats, and remain for a few moments of silent prayer, while the organ is played very softly. During this time the minister walks quietly to the door, where he will be ready to greet the people, as, at a given signal from the organist, all arise and pass out of the house of worship. Visiting and talking in the church auditorium is thus avoided.²⁴¹

Later Church Manuals did not make any change to the prescribed order of service until 1951²⁴² when two changes are noticed: (1) the disappearance of Scripture reading in the short service, reducing the amount of Scripture purposely read in worship; and (2) an alternative concerning post benediction: the congregation could opt to remain standing or to sit.

Two sentences from their first *Church Manual* (1932) and from the most recent one (2015) capture similar attitudes toward the order of Adventist worship. The first *Church Manual* simply states that “[i]t has never been our custom to prescribe a set form or order for public worship.”²⁴³ The latest *Church Manual* points forth the same idea: “Forms of service vary from country to country and culture to culture.”²⁴⁴ Yet, Adventists, across the world, have generally maintained liturgical uniformity by adhering to the suggested orders of the *Church Manual*. Their church service reflects the threefold movement of Song-Word-Response, typical of the Revivalist tradition and usually conducted with “reverence, simplicity, and promptness.”²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ *Church Manual*, 1932, 151-152.

²⁴² General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual*, 1951.

²⁴³ *Church Manual*, 1932, 151.

²⁴⁴ *Church Manual*, 2015, 121-123.

²⁴⁵ *Church Manual*, 2015, 121. The 1951 states “Promptness, reverence, and simplicity should characterize the whole service.”

The greatest change is elsewhere. It is found in a clearer spelling out of an Adventist theological understanding of worship. Regarding divine service, the 1951 *Church Manual* states:

The Sabbath worship service is the most important of all the meetings of the church. Here the members gather week by week to hear the Word of God, to unite in worshipping God in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving, and to gather strength and grace to fight the battles of life. Promptness, reverence, and simplicity should characterize the whole service.²⁴⁶

The revised *Church Manual* of 1951 also expressly emphasises the sacred character of worship, especially in its corporate manifestation and the necessity of careful planning.²⁴⁷ Most importantly, the 1951 *Manual* explains the two main divisions of the worship service: “1. The congregational response in praise and adoration, expressed in song, prayer, and gifts. 2. The message of instruction from the Word of God.”²⁴⁸

Concerning those officiating, the *Church Manual* spells out their duty as follows:

He who brings the message and breaks the bread of life should fully sense the sacredness of this work. He should be thoroughly prepared. Then, too, the one leading the worshipers into the presence of God through the medium of the pastoral prayer is performing perhaps the holiest exercise of the whole service, and he who is charged with this responsibility must sense its importance. He should face the congregation, and the congregation in turn should as far as possible kneel and face the rostrum. The prayer should be brief but should include the personal needs of the worshipers as well as the great world field.²⁴⁹

Interestingly, no special attention is given to congregational singing. However, choir singing is deemed “appropriate.” The offering is seen as “a vital part of the worship

²⁴⁶ *Church Manual*, 1951, 106.

²⁴⁷ *Church Manual*, 1951, 106.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

hour.”²⁵⁰ The deepening of the theology of Adventist worship in the 1951 *Church Manual* indicates a greater awareness of the importance of worship in Adventist circles.

The 2015 edition of the *Church Manual* reflects an even clearer understanding. It states:

The purpose of all services and meetings is to worship God for His creative work and for the benefits of His salvation; to understand His Word, His teachings, and His purposes; to fellowship in faith and love; to witness about our personal faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice at the cross; and to learn how to fulfill the gospel commission of making disciples in all the world (Matt. 28:19, 20).²⁵¹

This quote encapsulates the current official understanding of worship informing its weekly exercise in Seventh-day Adventist congregations. Clearly, the relationship between creation, salvation and worship is highlighted. The church at worship is seen as the community of creation and salvation, gathered around the Word, united in worshipping God in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving, in order to become a community of love and proclamation.

3.3.4.3 An Illustration: The Battle Creek Church.

The uniform practice of Sabbath worship, forged by close adherence to the *Church Manual*, has given Adventism a recognizable liturgical identity over the years. Although openness to local expressions has never been stifled, local congregations have been relatively slow to change the traditional format of Adventist worship.

A study of church bulletins reveals how congregations interpret and conduct weekly worship. One of those congregations is the Battle Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan. Built in 1878, the Battle Creek Church was home to James and Ellen White for many years. A comparison of their Church Bulletins over the years

²⁵⁰ *Church Manual*, 1951, 108-109.

²⁵¹ *Church Manual*, 2015, 116.

reveals a conservative Free-Church understanding of worship. The following table shows a comparison of their orders of service, from the dedication service of the church held on Sunday, the 20th of April 1879 to a later typical service held on September 23, 2017

<i>Battle Creek (Dedication Service) 1879</i>	<i>November 8, 1919</i>	<i>June 16, 1962</i>	<i>January 20, 1990</i>	<i>September 23, 2017</i>
<i>Anthem</i>	<i>Musical Prelude</i>	THE MEDITATION	GATHERING IN HIS PRESENCE	<i>Welcome & Announcements</i>
<i>Invocation Hymn</i>	<i>Gloria Invocation</i>	<i>Organ</i>	<i>Prelude of Hymns Focus on God's Family Call to Worship Giving of Gifts</i>	<i>Praise Sing Call to Worship Opening Hymn Congregational Prayer</i>
<i>Scripture Reading [Brief History of denominational work in Battle Creek] [Building Committee Report] Hymn</i>	<i>Hymn Scripture Reading</i>	THE INVOCATION <i>Pastoral Call to Worship</i>		
	<i>Prayer</i>	<i>Choral Call to Worship</i>	<i>Offertory</i>	<i>Lamb's Offering</i>
<i>Sermon</i>	<i>Offertory</i>	<i>Processional Hymn</i>	<i>Hymn of Praise</i>	<i>Children's Story Giving of Gifts</i>
<i>Hymn Dedicatory Prayer Anthem</i>	<i>Sermon [Baptismal Service]</i>	<i>The Invocation and Lord's Prayer Gloria Patri</i>	<i>Invocation</i>	<i>Offertory Scripture Reading Special Music</i>
<i>Benediction</i>		THE DEDICATION OF GIFTS <i>Presentation of Tithes and Offerings Choral Prayer of Dedication Offertory</i>	CELEBRATING HIS GOODNESS <i>From the Children's Perspective Sharing His Goodness Choir Anthem</i>	<i>Sermon Closing Hymn</i>
			<i>Congregational Prayer Proclaiming God's Word</i>	<i>Benediction Postlude</i>
		THE PREPARATION AND DEDICATION OF HEART <i>Hymn Reading of God's Word</i>		
		<i>Prayer Choral Response</i>	COMMITTING OUR LIVES <i>Hymn of Response Choral Commitment Benediction Postlude</i>	
		THE MINISTRATION OF THE WORD <i>Anthem Sermon Hymn</i>		
		THE BENEDICTION <i>The Prayer of Blessing Choral Benediction Postlude</i>		

Covering a period of more than a century, the Battle Creek SDA Church bulletins reveal a quite stable order of service with varying degree of explicit theological awareness. For instance, the 1962 bulletin demonstrates a lot of intentionality in the order of service where each part of the service is carefully thought through. By contrast, the 2017 order of service, which now includes ‘Praise Sing’ section, indicates a major change in how the church conducts its worship every week. We now turn to this new development to conclude our historical overview of Adventist worship.

3.3.5 Revisiting Adventist Worship

The period of the late 1980s saw a renewed interest among a number of Adventist churches in revisiting their understanding and practice of corporate worship. A considerable number of congregations have found it necessary to revive their style of worship to be more in tune with the changing times. We will select two main types of services that reflect worship renewal: (1) Celebration or contemporary services, and (2) blended-worship.

3.3.5.1 Celebration Services.

After a period of liturgical stability, where decorum was regularly emphasised, a number of Adventist congregations deemed it necessary to break away from the traditional format of worship. They started experimenting with new ways of glorifying God by giving renewed prominence to the joyful praise of God. That led to the emergence of a new style of worship in Adventism, originally termed “Celebration Services” before its subsequent transformation into contemporary worship services.

Although the roots of this particular form of worship can be traced back to such diverse sources as Methodist Revivalism, the Holiness Movement, African-American

churches and the Jesus Movement of the 1960s,²⁵² it is most closely linked to what Peter Wagner calls the “Third Wave of Charismatic movements”²⁵³ that swept across the Christian landscape in recent years. The phenomenal growth of the Charismatic movement and its subsequent influence over churches have meant that “charismatic styles of worship have diffused throughout congregations and denominations of varied theological persuasions,”²⁵⁴ including Seventh-day Adventism. Hailed by some as a new touch of Pentecost, it is accused by others of representing ‘the blowing not of the Spirit of God but of the spirit of the age.’²⁵⁵

Celebration services revisited Adventist worship in a drastic way. The traditional organ or piano gave way to drum sets, electric guitars and a variety of modern instruments. Instead of old hymns, congregations started singing newly released Praise and Worship songs written in contemporary tunes and beats. In place of singing from the pew hymnals, worshippers sang from lyrics projected on large screens.

Three main elements comprised the order of service and are still traceable in today’s contemporary worship services. These are praise, prayer, and preaching. The order of worship is roughly as follows:

²⁵² James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 192-216; Don Williams, *Charismatic Worship* in Paul A. Basden, ed., *Exploring the Worship Spectrum: Six Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 139-144; Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 22-27; see also Platinga and Rozeboom, *Discerning the Spirits*, 27-38; Basden, *Exploring the Worship Spectrum*, 75-83.

²⁵³ Wagner suggests that the first wave was the Pentecostal movement of the 1900s, followed by the charismatic movement of the 1960s. According to him, the third wave which started in the 1970s and 80s is still unfurling. See Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1988).

²⁵⁴ Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22.

²⁵⁵ Cornelius Platinga Jr. and Sue Rozeboom, *Discerning the Spirits: A Guide to Thinking About Christian Worship Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 3.

- Welcome and Invocation
- Time of worship in music
- Scripture Reading
- A drama for adults
- Announcements and offertory
- Pastoral Prayer
- The sermon
- Prayer
- Chorus

The elements of a typical Adventist contemporary service normally consist of an extended period of contemporary congregational singing with simple lyrics projected on large screens. Congregational singing follows the typology of the Old Testament sanctuary, usually espoused by Charismatic or Pentecostal churches: “(1) thanksgiving and praise at the gate, (2) repentance and cleansing in the courtyard, (3) proclamation of God’s Word and action in the Holy Spirit in the holy place, and (4) drawing near into the intimate relationship with God in the most holy place where one speaks directly to God.”²⁵⁶

It is mostly through lively, expressive, and participative songs that congregations actively seek the presence of God through the sacramental use of contemporary worship songs.²⁵⁷ From fast-paced praise songs that extol God’s greatness and power to mellow worship music, worshippers are invited to experience an ever-increasing sense of God’s presence in their midst.

²⁵⁶ Viviane Haenni, *Colton Celebration Center*, 98.

²⁵⁷ For an analysis of such style of worship, see Lester Ruth, “Praise & Worship Movement” in Paul F. Bradshaw, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 378.

In most contemporary services, lyrics are kept simple, current and short and they stress heartfelt thanks and praise for God's greatness and goodness. The use of PowerPoint technology in worship services also favours greater bodily freedom than hymnals would allow. The raising of hands and clapping in worship are not uncommon.

Another element of the nature of music in those churches is the emphasis of songs *to* God rather than songs *about* God. In his study on contemporary music, Anglican theologian, Pete Ward, argues that this shift denotes a move from objective to reflexive worship.²⁵⁸ Whereas traditional hymns in Adventism tend to be more centred on the "objective" rehearsal of salvation history, contemporary songs tend to stress more our feelings and emotions toward God. This shift is accompanied by a greater sense of proximity and expectation because it emphasises God's present involvement in the midst of His chosen people.

The next section after the extended period of singing is the reading of Scripture sometimes followed by a well-rehearsed drama describing the joys and dilemmas of life. Usually after the drama come some announcements, the offertory and the pastoral prayer.

The pastoral prayer allows time for a prolonged period of prayer. Worshippers who feel a special need for God's intervention in their lives are invited to come forward while soft music is played. Worshippers come forward and kneel as the pastor prays audibly and other worship leaders lay hands upon them, while interceding silently.

The next item is a "practical" sermon, delivered in simple language and illustrated with PowerPoint presentations or video clips. The aim is to be relevant and to meet worshippers' needs. The service then ends with a prayer and a simple chorus. Celebration/contemporary services insist on the necessity of engaging God experientially

²⁵⁸ Pete Ward, *Selling Worship: How What We Sing Has Changed the Church* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2005), 207.

in worship, contrasting with the more cognitive experience usually presented in traditional Adventist worship.

In most Adventist celebration services today, corporate worship is informal but not unplanned. Many of the celebration churches have developed a theology of worship to accompany their liturgical innovations. One of these pioneering congregations, *Celebration Center* in California released a statement in 1991 to explain the basis of their worship practices. It describes worship as a response in spirit and in truth where attitudes and emotions are involved. Then, it builds a case with Bible references to legitimize exercises like shouting, the lifting of the hands as well as clapping.²⁵⁹ Regardless of their biblical and theological argumentation, celebration/contemporary services have attracted quite a storm of criticism from certain corners, especially in the early stage.²⁶⁰ Some expressed fear that such worship expressions were introducing Neo-Pentecostalism into the denomination, repeating the much-feared Holy Flesh movement of the 1900s. Others raised a concern whether such worship services would not be detrimental to the denomination in the long run because of their obsession with novelty and the toning down of Adventist doctrinal distinctiveness.

Adventist theologians, like Raymond Holmes, were quick to point out that celebration services had introduced unexpected dynamics into Adventist worship, ranging from weaker theological identifications to a greater ease of adopting an entertainment

²⁵⁹ R. and D. Shelden, "Celebration Center: Concepts on Church Service," handout given at the Lay-Expo, Riverside, CA, 15 February 1991, quoted in Viviane Haenni, 101.

²⁶⁰ For critical views against Celebration churches, see Viviane Haenni, "The Colton Celebration Congregation," 247-283. For more recent critics see for instance *Adventist Affirm*, Summer 2000, vol.4, no.2; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, ed., *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005); Harold B. Hannum, "Worship: Sacred and Secular," *Elder's Digest*, October/December 2007.

model and a feel-good mentality.²⁶¹ According to Holmes, Adventism had become vulnerable to such styles of worship because of the lack of attention given to worship and this had created a vacuum that celebration services filled. For Holmes, it was definitely time for Adventists to begin thinking seriously about an Adventist theology of worship.²⁶²

Yet, celebration services also received affirmation from other corners²⁶³ who felt that Adventist worship was due for urgent renewal if it were to remain meaningful and relevant to members and visitors alike, making the observation that churches that had adopted that style of worship were “experiencing an exciting growth in membership.”²⁶⁴ Others expressed the view that celebration services were in a way a reconnecting with the early Adventist worship tradition that gave more space to spontaneity, praise and the display of religious affections.²⁶⁵

As time passed, the polarization over worship styles subsided within Adventism. Full-fledged contemporary services remain relatively few in comparison to the great number of churches that have kept the basic traditional order of service. This does not mean that churches which embrace contemporary worship do not exercise an influence on Adventist worship, especially on congregations who are open to liturgical changes but

²⁶¹ See for instance, Raymond Holmes, “Authentic Adventist Worship” *Ministry*, October 1991, 13-16.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁶³ J. David Newman and Kenneth Wade, “Is it Safe to Celebrate,” *Ministry Magazine*, June 1990, 26-29; John Solomon, “Worship and Praise: One Model for Change in the Worship Hour,” *Ministry Magazine*, February 2000, 16-19.

²⁶⁴ Darryl Comstock, “Selling Change: How to Bring about Change in your Church without Losing your Members” *Ministry Magazine*, October 1991, 30.

²⁶⁵ Arthur Patrick, (c. 1999), “Early Adventist Worship, Ellen White and the Holy Spirit: Preliminary Historical Perspectives,” Spiritual Discernment Conference, accessed November 2, 2017, <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/>.

that are not ready to discard the benefits of traditional Adventist worship. Those churches have chosen to conduct blended services.²⁶⁶

3.3.5.2 Blended Services.

The point of blended services is to secure the full participation of the whole church, with elements of Adventist tradition, contemporary praise songs and innovation cross-fertilized to enrich the worship experience of different worshipping communities. The increasing popularity of such types of services can be attributed to the fact that there are an increasing number of congregations that want to experience an eclectic mix of the old and new style in their worship of God. According to *AdventSource*, the official ministry resource distribution centre for the Adventist Church in North America, it is projected “that the blended service will be the format that will see the most growth and popularity in this decade.”²⁶⁷

In most churches, like *Battle Creek SDA Church* (see previous chart), however, a blended service simply means the introduction of fifteen minutes of congregational singing at the beginning of the worship in which traditional church hymnals and contemporary music are both sung. After that moment of congregational singing, the service returns to a traditional worship service format.

Other blended services use predominantly new songs throughout the whole service, but still follow quite closely the traditional order of service as suggested in the

²⁶⁶ Adventist blended services should not be confused with the blended or convergence worship associated with Robert E. Webber who defines blended worship as “a synthesis of the liturgical and contemporary worship renewal movements of the twentieth century.” (Robert Webber, *Exploring the Worship Spectrum* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 175. Adventists have not included the Catholic liturgical renewal movement into their liturgy but have moderately added elements of the charismatic renewal movement to their worship services.

²⁶⁷ Jim Teel, “Worship Styles,” accessed October 29, 2017, <https://www.adventsource.org/as30/plusLine.article.aspx?id=178>.

Church Manual. Below are two examples of blended services held in 2017 in two Adventist churches: *Azure Hills*²⁶⁸ in California and *Restoration Praise Center* in Maryland. They are listed side-by-side with the latest *Church Manual*'s suggested order of service for comparison:

<i>AZURE HILLS</i> , ²⁶⁹ CALIFORNIA	<i>RESTORATION PRAISE CENTER</i> , ²⁷⁰ MARYLAND	<i>Church Manual, 2015</i>
<i>Prelude</i>	<i>Entry Song (Contemporary)</i>	<i>Musical Prelude</i>
<i>Praise & Worship</i>	<i>Call to Worship & Invocation</i>	<i>Announcements</i>
<i>Invocation</i>	<i>Opening Song (Church Hymnal)</i>	<i>Doxology</i>
<i>Praise & Worship</i>	<i>Family / Member Welcome</i>	<i>Invocation</i>
<i>Announcements</i>	<i>Response (Gospel song)</i>	<i>Scripture Reading</i>
<i>Lambs' (Children's) Offering</i>	<i>Congregational Greeting</i>	<i>Hymn of Praise</i>
<i>Story Time</i>	<i>Pastoral Welcome / Announcements</i>	<i>Prayer</i>
<i>[Induction for Pathfinders/ (Scouts)]</i>	<i>Praise & Worship</i>	<i>Anthem or Special Music</i>
<i>Special Music</i>	<i>Prayer Preamble (Gospel song)</i>	<i>Offering</i>
<i>Offering Invitation</i>	<i>Pastoral Prayer</i>	<i>Hymn of Consecration</i>
<i>Offertory Song</i>	<i>Prayer Response (Gospel song)</i>	<i>Sermon</i>
<i>Prayer Invitation</i>	<i>[Baby Blessing]</i>	<i>Hymn</i>
<i>Prayer Song</i>	<i>Children Collecting Offering</i>	<i>Benediction</i>
<i>Morning (Pastoral) Prayer</i>	<i>Children's Story</i>	<i>Congregation standing or seated for a few moments of silent prayer</i>
<i>Prayer Response</i>	<i>Call and Prayer for Offering</i>	<i>Musical Postlude</i>
<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Collection of Offering</i>	
<i>Musical Meditation</i>	<i>Scripture Reading</i>	
<i>Sermon</i>	<i>Hymn</i>	
<i>Musical Selection</i>	<i>Sermon</i>	
<i>Benediction</i>	<i>Benediction</i>	
<i>Postlude</i>	<i>Recessional (Gospel Song)</i>	

²⁶⁸ Azure Hills SDA Church mission statement is "to continue Christ's ministry of revealing God's character, rejoicing in righteousness by faith and responding to people's needs." Church's website last accessed on October 29, 2017.

²⁶⁹ Azure Hills Church, Bulletin of October 21, 2017, accessed on October 29, 2017, <http://www.azurehills.org>.

²⁷⁰ Restoration Praise Center does not use church bulletins. The order of service shown is extracted from a longer 'flow sheet' used by worship leaders. Sent to me by the senior Pastor, Paul Graham, on October 29, 2017 covering the 28th October worship.

As indicated in the chart above, worshippers who attend Adventist blended services tend to sing much more than those who attend traditional services. Preaching is still central to the liturgical assembly but is not as dominant as in a typical traditional worship service. Blended worship in Adventist congregations tends to put more emphasis on a relational encounter with God and this is experienced mostly through music. In this “face-to-face” worship experience, being fully participatory becomes the fundamental condition for real encounter with God.

Other churches experience blended services in a more radical way. One of them is the *Church of the Advent Hope* in New York City.²⁷¹ The church started in 1956 and has a membership of 200. Contrary to most Adventist churches, they have recently (2017) started following a fourfold pattern of Gather, Word, Response (or Table on communion Sabbaths), Dismiss/Sending. *Advent Hope*’s Minister of Music, Stephen Zork, explains the rationale behind that change in those words: “We thought it would help us be more intentional about the liturgical function of each practice.”²⁷²

²⁷¹ Their statement on worship reflects their commitment to a relationship with God and their neighbor. “Worshipping God together is an opportunity to meet one another as we meet the God who welcomes us all. We exist as a Church to live in loving, worshipful relationship with God and in loving community with all members of the human family. We gather every Saturday morning to practice this way of being in the world, taking time to be present to God, who is always present to us, and to be present to one another. We believe that the good news of welcome, reconciliation and healing through Jesus is for everyone; it changes us and changes the world. So wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here. We value diversity because we are all reflections of God’s image an essential part of a shared story. Join us as we rehearse this story, pray, give thanks, lament, question and learn to love together.” Accessed October 31, 2017, <https://www.adventhope.org/worship/>.

²⁷² Stephen Zork, *Advent Hope*’s minister of music, interview conducted on November 2, 2017.

Their typical worship service²⁷³ looks like this:

Prelude

Gathering

Invocation, Confession and Petition (Worship Leader Prays):

Holy God, we gather to worship You, our Creator and Redeemer, believing that you are present with us. We confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. Forgive us of our sins, heal and transform us by the Spirit, and raise us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gathering Song

Welcome and Interview with Community Member

Meet and greet

Kid's Feature

Musical Meditation

Word

Song

Scripture Reading

Reader: *This is the Word of the Lord*

Congregation: *Thanks be to God*

Sermon

Response

Song of Response

Gospel Reading (congregationally and standing)

Song of Response

Congregational Prayer

Song Reprise

Sending

Community Life (Announcements)

Offertory

Song of Response

Benediction & Dismissal

Dismissal: *And now may the God who is present to you be present through you as you bless one another with the words 'Sabbath Peace.'*

Postlude

Stephen Zork further explains the move to a fourfold pattern this way:

I think of worship not as a static state but as something people do in response to divine presence and initiative through which we remember, rehearse and learn to be who we are in Christ. We become the Body of Christ when we worship. We do not merely rehearse the story of redemption in Christ. We practice embodying that story. That's where the fourfold pattern is helpful. We learn to GATHER—to

²⁷³ Extracted from the more elaborate template used by worship leaders. Submitted by Stephen Zork, Advent Hope worship leader, on October 30, 2017 for November 4, 2017 worship service.

meet God and one another, to welcome as we are welcomed, to include as we are included. We encounter the WORD and rehearse the Gospel story. We RESPOND, ideally at the Table by accepting the gift of Jesus, giving thanks and sharing that reality with others. And we are SENT—we are transformed by God through the practices we have rehearsed together in God’s presence. And we live out the liturgy of life differently, for the sake of world, as a result.²⁷⁴

For churches like *Advent Hope*, to worship means first of all a way of being different in the world. It is a participatory event in which worshippers become immersed in the Gospel narrative so as to be transformed by it and become agents of transformation in return.

3.4 CONCLUSION: THE PATTERNING OF WORSHIP

In addressing the history of Adventist worship, our aim was to elucidate and clarify its essential nature and characteristics. We did so by establishing the liturgical facts through an analysis of who Adventists are and how they have been worshipping over the years. As Schmemmann explains, the task of the liturgical theologian is to “translate what is expressed by the language of worship- its structures, its ceremonies, its texts and its whole ‘spirit’ - into the language of theology.”²⁷⁵ In other words, we have looked at what he calls the core structure of the liturgy to elucidate its theological meaning.

However, whereas Schmemmann worked with the relatively fixed liturgy of the Orthodox Church based on centuries of tradition, we have examined a denomination

²⁷⁴ Interview conducted on November 1, 2017.

²⁷⁵ Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 19.

whose official position states that “there is no set form or order for public worship”²⁷⁶ and that “forms of service vary from country to country and culture to culture.”²⁷⁷

So how can one seek a meaningful understanding of Adventist worship? First of all, by agreeing with worship historian, James F. White that “[p]eople are the primary liturgical document.”²⁷⁸ In other words, a worship tradition, especially for those in the Free Church tradition, can be best understood in terms of the people themselves. We need to know what they consider important and how those elements are reflected in their act of worship. For White, it is necessary to know their distinct piety, “the essential equipment worshippers bring to church,”²⁷⁹ and how they relate to time and space.²⁸⁰ Baptist theologian, Christopher Ellis, calls all these essentials “liturgical values.” He insists that it is those liturgical values, and not merely an *ordo*, that can help us better understand Free Church worship. He puts it this way:

Tradition does not carry for the Free Churches the burden of authority which it would carry within the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches. Authority is found elsewhere—in Scripture, the missionary imperative, pastoral need and common sense rationalism. Thus, the *ordo*, the underlying principles, of evolving worship cannot carry *lex credendi* in the way that Schmemmann claims for the Orthodox, because the patterning of worship is subservient to other theological authorities.²⁸¹

Unless one also understands these dynamics, it would be impossible to detect and articulate a reliable theology of worship. Our historical survey reveals general shapes or patterns as well as liturgical values that are operative in Adventist worship. Those

²⁷⁶ *Church Manual*, 2015, 122.

²⁷⁷ *Church Manual*, 2015, 179.

²⁷⁸ James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*, 1.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-20.

²⁸¹ Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering*, 67.

findings will now provide the basis for exploring and developing an Adventist theology of worship. A number of preliminary findings can be noted here:

First, Adventist worship expresses liturgical time in a different way to mainstream Christianity. Adventists do not observe a liturgical year. They have their own ‘church year’ that is divided into four quarters and they celebrate the Lord’s Supper at the end of each quarter. Worship on Saturday, rather than Sunday, is the most distinguishing feature of their liturgical practices. Adventists do not ascribe sacredness to Sunday as a day of worship. Instead, they observe the seventh day Sabbath in literal obedience to the fourth commandment and consecrate this day for their public acts of worship. “It is this weekly celebration that gives Adventists their particular understanding of time, their peculiar temporal obligations, and their sense of extraordinary future that is projected for the church.”²⁸² It must be noted that the Adventist interpretation of the Sabbath has been relatively consistent since the 1840s. Its observance has been supported through the use of Scriptural and historical data. However, whereas early literature insisted mostly on the right *day* of worship, more recent writings have been more theological in nature, insisting on the right *way* of worship. Greater emphasis has been laid on the existential and liturgical dimension of the Sabbath.²⁸³ This aspect of the Sabbath will be developed fully in Chapter Six.

Second, we note that despite the fact that authority for liturgical adaptations is vested in local congregations, Adventism does not display a wide variety of worship practices. Its worship has a recognizable shape that can be attributed to the influence of

²⁸² Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 230.

²⁸³ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today*. Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1990; Roy Branson, *Festival of the Sabbath*. Takoma Park, MD: Association of Adventist Forums, 1985; Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and Second Advent*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1978; Sigve Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*. Berrien Springs MI, Andrews University Press, 2009.

the *Church Manual* that has governed Adventist local church polity since 1932. Common liturgical values attach meaning to Adventist worship, whether it is expressed in a traditional, contemporary or blended format. “Despite these divergences, Adventist worship is generally restrained and carefully organised, and bears no resemblance to the unstructured, ecstasy-inducing practices of the church’s earlier years.”²⁸⁴ The sequential arrangement of items in the service ensures that there are both form and freedom in Adventist worship.

Third, Adventist worship is uncomplicated. The sense of reverence is actuated by a sense of God’s presence whereas simplicity is expressed through a lack of clerical vestments, processions and complex rituals. For Seventh-day Adventists, freedom in Christ is best expressed by worship that comes from the heart, most clearly expressed through extemporaneous prayers. As such, “The Lord’s prayer,” for instance, “is not a usual part of Adventist worship, but is considered a model prayer given to us by Christ.”²⁸⁵ In addition, decorum is not dependent upon elaborate ceremonies but relies first and foremost upon the spiritual consecration of the worshippers.

Fourth, Adventist worship at its best is characterized by ardent, active piety. In other words, worship is spiritual in the sense that it is heavily dependent on the activity of the Holy Spirit. This implies the full engagement of the liturgical assembly whether it is through their praying, praising, giving or preaching. Worshippers may express spiritual exultation by the lifting of hands, by audible “Amen,” “Hallelujahs” or “Praise the Lord,” or simply by a teary eye. This presupposes an active personal spirituality that finds its climatic expression in the liturgical assembly. Finally, Adventist worship recognises

²⁸⁴ Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 221.

²⁸⁵ Denis Fortin, “A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective on Worship”, 167.

the centrality of preaching. The sermon is the centrepiece of the liturgy. Worshippers come with the expectation of receiving a word from the Lord delivered by an inspirational preacher. The assembly's experience of God is never divorced from the act of proclamation. The sermon is not for intellectual information only but for spiritual transformation by lifting up Christ as Saviour and Lord. As such, proclamation expects a response on the part of worshippers. On the other hand, Communion is not a regular feature of Adventist worship. The focus is on the pulpit rather than on the table. God is principally met through the preaching of the Word rather than in the partaking of emblems.

With this historical overview of Adventist worship, we are now ready to address in more detail the central elements that constitute Adventist weekly worship.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 ELEMENTS OF ADVENTIST WORSHIP

The previous chapter provided a general introduction to Adventist worship. It addressed its history, identified the central elements as well as the liturgical values that have constantly shaped and undergirded its practice. This chapter now examines the central components of Adventist weekly worship, namely prayer, preaching, singing and giving. To complete our picture, Sabbath-keeping which is at the heart of Adventist worship, as well as the ordinances of baptism and Communion, will also receive our attention. However, in order to better interpret Adventist public worship, it is crucial that we first understand the piety that sustains it.

4.1 SPIRITUALITY AND WORSHIP

The interrelationship between everyday spirituality and public worship cannot be underestimated because they shape each other.¹ Adventist corporate worship draws on the vibrancy of private and family worship. Conversely, devotional practices are shaped by what happens in public worship. Hence, our starting point in this chapter is a brief

¹ Tish Harrison, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016); Aidan Kavanagh, *Religious Life and Worship*; Angela Ashwin, "Spirituality and Corporate Worship — Separate Worlds or Vitally Connected?" *Worship* 75 no. 2, March 2, 2001, 106–29; E. Glenn Hinson, "Private Springs of Public Worship," *Review & Expositor*, 1983, 109–117; McKenzie, Jennifer, "Benedictine Spirituality and Congregational Life: Living Out St. Benedicts's Rule in the Parish," *Congregations* 30 no. 1, Winter 2004, 31–33; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Lee Magness Lee, "You (All) Are the Temple of God: Spirituality and Worship," *Leaven* 12(4), Article 11, 2004; Nancy Rosenberger Faus, "Spirituality and Worship in the Church of the Brethren," *Brethren Life and Thought* 39 (4): 241–250.

introduction to Adventist spirituality outlining the vital link that exists between private devotion, family worship and public worship.

4.1.1 Private Devotion and Family Worship

Adventists believe that “[o]ne of the great misunderstanding of Christian life is that salvation is a free gift of God’s grace-and that’s the end of the story.”² Instead they believe that “[s]alvation includes living a sanctified life on the basis of what Christ accomplished at Calvary.”³ For them, the Christian life, including authentic worship, flows from a transformed spiritual life.⁴ This theme was of major importance for Ellen G. White, one of the co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For her, conformity to Christ in character, habits and life is crucial to the Christian life.⁵ Spiritual renewal and transformation is principally brought by the contemplation of the person and life of Christ.⁶ Crucial to this experience is the person of Jesus Christ for it is in beholding Him

² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 155.

³ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴ Ellen White, *Christian Experience and Teaching of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1922), 104; Ellen White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:267, 268; *Counsels on Health*, 568, *Early Writings*, 47; *Review and Herald* March 22, 1887, par. 1.

⁵ *Review and Herald*, May 30, 1907; *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 559; *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 15-16; *Maranatha: The Lord is Coming* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 46; MB 141.2; *Signs of the Times*, December 28, 1891; *Review and Herald*, October, 1893; 12 *Manuscript Releases* 50; *Signs of the Times*, April 9, 1902; *Review and Herald*, August 26, 1890; *Signs of the Times* August 1, 1892; *The Home Missionary*, November 1, 1893 12; *The Home Missionary*, November 1, 1893; *Signs of the Times*, August 1, 1892; *Review and Herald*, June 18, 1889; 20 *Manuscript Releases* 30; see also, *The Southern Watchman*, January 29, 1903; *The Upward Look* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 283; *Lift Him Up* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 346; 18 *Manuscript Releases* 158; 15 *Manuscript Releases* 330; 5 *Manuscript Releases* 4; 4 *Manuscript Releases* 172; 1 *Manuscript Releases* 204; *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1930), 125; *Gospel Workers 1892* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892), 106.

⁶ *Testimonies to the Church* 5:625; *Manuscript* 155, 1902; *Gospel Workers*, 29; 18 *Manuscript Releases* 19; 16 *Manuscript Releases* 47; 10 *Manuscript Releases* 331; *Maranatha: The Lord is Coming*, 318, *Letter* 22, 1887; Ellen White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), 43; *Signs of the Times*, August 17, 1891.

that “a divine transformation takes place in the character.”⁷ Spirituality is understood as a comprehensive way of life in which devotion and activity, worship and work are interwoven,⁸ gradually transforming the believer into Christ’s image.⁹

It is this overall vision of the Christian life that sustains Adventist family spirituality and worship.¹⁰ Seventh-day Adventists believe that “the home is a primary setting for the restoration of the image of God in men and women,”¹¹ a most favourable setting for the renewal of faith and transmission of religious values. Traditionally, the singing of hymns, the reading of Scripture and praying have constituted Adventist daily family worship.¹²

4.1.2 Prayer Meetings

The aspiration for a deeper Christian walk is also shaped by prayer meetings, which are typically held in churches every Wednesday. Prayer meetings give ample time for singing, testimonies, extemporaneous prayers and the study of the Word. In addition,

⁷ Ellen White, *Christ Object Lessons*, 250; See also *Steps to Christ*, 88, 89; *Education*, 297; *Testimonies to the Church* 2:266, 267; *Review and Herald*, March 24, 1891, *Gospel Workers*, 36; *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 362.

⁸ *Letter* 224-1906.

⁹ Ellen White, *1 Manuscript Releases*, 371; *Review and Herald*, February 22, 1887; Ellen White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 96; *Testimonies to the Church*. 9:119, *Review and Herald*, August 17, 1886, 5; *Review and Herald*, October 22, 1914.

¹⁰ Ellen White, *Gospel Workers*, 100. See also *Signs of the Times*, January 29, 1902. (see James White, *Review and Herald*, February 21, 1854, 36; “Drawing Near to God,” *Review & Herald*, February 21, 1854, 35, *Review & Herald*, February 24, 1863, 102 (see also, Uriah Smith, *Review & Herald* April 23, 1857, 193; see also Byington, *Review & Herald*, February 7, 1856, 152; Brother Wheeler, *Review & Herald* March 7, 1854, 54; Uriah Smith: *Review & Herald* April 16, 1857, 185; Joseph Bates, *Review & Herald*, September 12, 1854, 38; Waggoner in *Signs of the Times*, 15, May 13, 1889.

¹¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 330.

¹² For an exploration of the history of Adventist family worship, see L. Edgel Philips, *An Exploratory Study of the Aims and Methods of Family Worship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1992), 36-77.

it is also not uncommon for Adventists to have regular prayer meetings at designated church members' houses. These meetings include the same elements as in church prayer meetings but tend to be more informal in nature.

4.1.3 Sabbath-Keeping

Kenneth A. Strand has observed thus: “the axiom that religious practices are no better than the theology that informs and undergirds them applies to Sabbathkeeping and Sabbath theology as well as to all other facets of religious observance.”¹³ As it has been alluded in previous sections, Adventist spirituality finds its best expression in Sabbath-keeping. Sabbath observance incorporates the central elements of their understanding of God and informs their response to Him. Adventists consider the Sabbath to be God’s designated day of rest, worship and ministry.¹⁴ The Sabbath can be fully enjoyed through communion with God in fellowship with one another.

As to the *meaning* of Sabbath-keeping, Adventists regard their Sabbath-keeping to be scriptural.¹⁵ They believe that God rested on the seventh-day as an example for humanity to follow. The three divine acts of resting, blessing and hallowing (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11) indicate the unique importance of the Sabbath. As God’s gift of holy time, the seventh-day is set aside for God and holy activities. It provides believers with both

¹³ Kenneth A. Strand. “The Sabbath” in Raoul Dederen et al. (eds). *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 508. Strand has undertaken a deeply biblical theology of the Sabbath, tracing its concept both in the Old and New Testaments, as well as highlighting its connection to the doctrine of God, the doctrine of humanity, the doctrine of salvation, the doctrine of the church, and the doctrine of last things, among others (pp. 493-537).

¹⁴ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 281.

¹⁵ “Sabbath,” in *Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996), 11:505.

spiritual and physical rest, so as to take delight in the Lord (Isa. 58:13-14), especially in corporate worship, as they celebrate God's creative, redemptive and sanctifying work.¹⁶

For Adventists, Sabbath-keeping finds its source and meaning in Christ, the Creator and Redeemer, "the Lord of the Sabbath" (Luke 6:5).¹⁷ The Adventist position can be summarised this way: "The basis for both our Sabbath theology and Sabbathkeeping is a close personal relationship with Christ, our Saviour."¹⁸ It is Christ's own example of worshipping, fellowshiping and healing on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-31; 3:1-5; Luke 4:16-27; 13:10-17; 14:2-4; John 5:1-15; 9:1-14) which provide them the ultimate justification and example for their Sabbath observance. For these reasons, Adventist Sabbath-keeping can be considered to be Christologically focused. Adventists believe that, contrary to the Pharasaic way of Sabbath observance, Christ emphasised the spiritual principles of true Sabbath-keeping.¹⁹ They believe that Sabbath sacredness has not been transferred to Sunday.²⁰ Rather, Sabbath observance, for the faith community, is considered as an evidence of their loyalty to God and of their fellowship with Him.²¹

As to the *manner* of Sabbath-keeping, Adventists believe that they "observe the day in a spirit of worship and devotion of heart and not legalistically as a means to divine

¹⁶ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 281.

¹⁷ *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 288.

¹⁸ "Sabbath," 514.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 505.

²⁰ See for instance the work of Adventist historian Samuel Bacchiochi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*. Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977. For a contrasting view, see Carson, Donald A., ed. *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999.

²¹ *Church Manual*, 2015, 144.

favour.”²² For the Sabbath to be a meaningfully rich spiritual experience, it must be prepared for in advance (ref. Luke 23:54).²³ Whereas it is assumed that preparations take the whole week, Friday is especially referred to as the “preparation day” (ref. Mark 15:42).²⁴ This means the completion of all household tasks, including the cleaning of the house, the preparing of Sabbath food and the readying of Sabbath clothes before sundown Friday.

Adventists follow the biblical model of beginning the Sabbath at sundown Friday and ending it at sundown Saturday (ref. Lev. 23:32; Luke 4:31, 40). The 24-hour period is entirely dedicated to God’s service. The desirable vespers practice is to gather in the family circle at sunset to welcome the Sabbath with prayer, song and Bible reading and to close it in the same way.²⁵ The whole of the Sabbath is considered as a period of sacred time.

The *Church Manual* suggests the following with regard to Sabbath-keeping:

The Sabbath is a special day for worship in our homes and churches, a day of joy to ourselves and our children, a day in which we can learn more of God through the Bible and the great lesson book of nature. It is a time we can visit the sick and work for the salvation of souls. We should lay aside the ordinary affairs of the six working days and perform no unnecessary work. We should not let secular media occupy our time on God’s holy day.²⁶

²² “Sabbath,” 505.

²³ Adventist Sabbath observance is quite consistent worldwide, see May-Ellen M. Colón, *Sabbath-keeping Practices and Factors Related to These Practices Among Seventh-day Adventists in 51 Countries*,” Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2003. Ekkehardt Mueller, “How to Keep the Sabbath Holy?,” <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/SabbathObservance.pdf>. Last accessed, May 18, 2019; General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Sabbath Observance: Purpose and Perspective,” Jul 09, 1990. <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/-/sabbath-observance-1/>. Last accessed, May 18, 2019.

²⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 296.

²⁵ *Church Manual*, 144.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 144-145.

The Sabbath, in Adventist understanding, means stopping anything considered work or distraction toward giving undivided attention to God and His restorative agenda. This intentional setting aside of the seventh-day punctuates Adventist spirituality, offering believers time for renewal and rededication. Their Sabbath pattern intensifies their weekday spiritual practice. Adventist Sabbath praxis, at its core, means resting, remembering, reflecting, worshipping, fellowshiping, serving and rejoicing in God- “a veritable foretaste of our heavenly rest.”²⁷

All these aspects of Sabbath affect their understanding of corporate worship, to which we will return in Chapters Five and Six.

4.1.4 Sabbath School

Sabbath School, the equivalent of Sunday School in other Christian denominations, holds a place of key importance for Adventists.²⁸ It has been described as “the church at study.”²⁹ This is a time when Adventists worldwide meet each Saturday morning, in connection with the divine worship service, for a time of fellowship and Bible study. At this study time, the church is divided into small classes, according to age groups, in order to discuss a uniform course of Bible study, called ‘Sabbath School

²⁷ *Church Manual*, 145.

²⁸ For most recent detailed studies on Sabbath School, see Laurentiu A. Serban, “Factors Related to Declining Attendance at the Adult Sabbath School in the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” PhD. Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2014); Lyndelle Brower Chiomenti, “A Comparison of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and a Prototype Guide Designed to Promote Spiritual Growth,” EdD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2007).

²⁹ *Church Manual*, 121.

lessons.’ These study guides are provided by the Adventist world church organisation on a quarterly basis.³⁰

Ideally, members personally study their daily lesson assignment on a book or theme of the Bible and come to Sabbath School to share in a group discussion. “By preparing each day for what will be shared at the group gathering, there is the opportunity for accountability and group support or correction when needed.”³¹ Adventist spirituality is hence forged and evaluated in the context of a community united by the study of Scripture. As believers study and interpret the Word of God with fellow church members, new insights are found.

Ideally, this means that by the time Adventist worshippers participate in corporate worship, they have nourished themselves through private devotion, engaged in daily family worship, shared their faith in words and deeds,³² and fellowshiped around the Word during Sabbath School. Ideally, this is the kind of spirituality that they bring into the worship service.

4.2 ELEMENTS OF ADVENTIST WORSHIP

What is the basic understanding that Adventists have of their weekly corporate worship? Their 2015 *Church Manual* puts it this way: “The Sabbath morning service has two main divisions: the congregational response in praise and adoration, expressed in

³⁰ For the origin of this practice, see Gary B. Swanson, “The History of Sabbath School,” accessed August 15, 2018, <https://adventistdigitallibrary.org/features/sabbathschool>.

³¹ Heather Ripley Crews, “Spiritual Disciplines of Early Adventists,” DMin Dissertation (Newberg, OR: George Fox University, 2016), 123.

³² Derek Morris, “Lord of Our Service,” in *The Spiritual Life: Experiencing Jesus Christ as Lord*, Derek Morris and John M Fowler, eds., (Grantham, UK: Stanborough Press, 2005), 96.

song, prayer, and gifts, and the message from the Word of God.”³³ According to this description, Adventist worship reflects a basic revelation-and-response pattern, although chronologically the sermon comes after the offerings and most of the songs and prayers. Nevertheless, worship is still understood as an active celebratory human response to “the message from the Word of God.” By “the message” is understood the Christian message, the message of salvation in Christ as portrayed in Scripture.³⁴

We will start our examination of the elements of Adventist worship with the sermon.

4.2.1 The Sermon

Preaching holds a central place for Adventists. The sermon is considered to be the highlight of their weekly worship service. For instance, Adventist *Church Manuals* from 1932 to 2015 have invariably designated their worship service as a “preaching service”³⁵ and have regrettably labeled everything that happened before the sermon as “preliminaries.”³⁶ In contrast, Norval Pease years ago called for “balanced worship, where Scripture reading, prayer, music, and preaching, blend together in spiritual worship.”³⁷ Similarly, Raymond Holmes posited that “preaching should be central, yes, but it is not the only significant activity taking place in worship.”³⁸

³³ *Church Manual*, 122.

³⁴ *Church Manual*, 2015., 123-124.

³⁵ See *Church Manual*, 1932, 158 and *Church Manual*, 2015, 181.

³⁶ See *Church Manual*, 1932, 151 and *Church Manual*, 2015, 122.

³⁷ Norval Pease, *And Worship Him*, 81.

³⁸ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song: Worship Renewal for Adventists Today*, 119.

As the climax of Adventist worship, the sermon shapes Adventist spirituality in a way that no other liturgical element does. For this reason, most Adventists would feel they have not worshipped if there was no sermon in their worship service.

The centrality of preaching is demonstrated visually. In Adventist churches, the pulpit is customarily placed at the centre of a raised platform opposite the main entrance door. This common spatial arrangement in Adventist churches, Bull and Lockhart argue, emphasises “the authority of the preacher, the centrality of the sermon, and the primacy of the word.”³⁹ An open Bible on the bench pulpit or the Communion table in front of the platform indicates the centrality of the written Word. In addition, the regular inclusion of a children’s sermon and appeals before the collection of offerings are indicators of a sermon culture.

4.2.1.1 Brief History.

The prioritizing of preaching in Adventist worship can be traced back to the Church’s Millerite heritage. Regarding the task of preaching, James White, one of the co-founders of the denomination, underlined that “a more solemn charge cannot be found in the Book of God.”⁴⁰ No wonder he later complained of Adventist ministers who “excel in those “good, long” afternoon visits . . . eloquent with the knife and fork” but who failed to demonstrate the same passion in their preaching.⁴¹ Insisting on the priority of the

³⁹ Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed., (Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press, 2007), 222.

⁴⁰ James White, “Preach the Word,” *Review & Herald*, December 11, 1855, 85.

⁴¹ James White, *Review & Herald*, October 7, 1875.

proclaimed Word, he yearned for consecrated preachers who could “preach the word of God with ability and power.”⁴²

It should be borne in mind that preaching was a rarity in early Adventist worship. In 1866, Uriah Smith, a leading figure in early Adventism observed “the living preacher is but occasionally heard by any of them [Adventist believers], and by some never.”⁴³ The reasons behind are simple: (1) the believers were scattered over wide territories and (2) many Adventist ministers were itinerant evangelists.⁴⁴ Still, Adventists considered the sermon to be “extremely valuable,” so much so that the *Review and Herald*, their official newspaper dedicated a ‘Sermon Column’ where Adventist sermons were regularly published.

How should we consider those written sermons? In his study of the Free Church tradition, Christopher Ellis makes the keen observation that “we should be cautious in only using sermon texts for examining the development of preaching in worship.”⁴⁵ Indeed, preaching goes beyond the written text of the sermon to include other factors like the preacher’s personality, style and enthusiasm. A comparison between sermons published in the *Review and Herald* and stenographic transcripts of other sermons delivered in various gatherings proves Ellis’ point. Compared to the polished sermons in the ‘Sermon Column’, stenographic transcripts reveal spontaneous, dynamic, interactive preaching. Here is an extract from a sermon delivered by Alonzo T. Jones in 1893:

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Review & Herald*, December 11, 1866.

⁴⁴ In the early days of Adventism, ministers had a very heavy preaching schedule. Adventist ministers preached on average “from two to three hundred discourses” a year. James White, *Review and Herald*, June 9, 1859.

⁴⁵ Christopher Ellis, *Gathering*, 127.

We will read first from Ephesians 1: 3-6. That takes us to the point where God began concerning us, and that will be as far back as, we need to go. The third verse: —

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” What is it he “hath” done? [Congregation: “Blessed us.”] Is it so? [Congregation: “Yes.”] Has done it? [Congregation: “Yes.”] He has blessed us with how many blessings? [Congregation: “All spiritual blessings.”] All the blessings he has? He has given us all? [Congregation: “Yes.”] How? [Congregation: “In Christ.”] In Christ. Then in giving Christ, what did God give? [Congregation: “All spiritual blessings.”] All the spiritual blessings that he had . . .

But the fourth verse is the one particularly that I want to read:- According as he hath chosen us." Will choose us? [Congregation: " Hath chosen us."] Has he? [Congregation: “Yes.”] When did he do it ? [Congregation: “ ‘Before the foundation of the World.’ I Thank the Lord ! “Before the foundation of the world “ he chose you and me. [Congregation : “Praise the Lord I “] Now, will you say “amen” to that every time? [Congregation: “Amen !”] I do not mean just now. Will you say it all the time? [Congregation: “Yes.”]⁴⁶

In the above extract, elements of *didache* are present along with *kerygma*.

Teaching and proclamation are fused together through the joint participation of the preacher and the congregation. Both parties are involved and each contributes to the sermon. It is not only the preacher but also the gathered community of faith that articulates and rehearses the Gospel. In this liturgical setting, preaching is dialogical in nature. This call-response format is still present in many Adventist churches, especially in African-American communities.⁴⁷

From a liturgical theology perspective, this means that an analysis of Adventist sermons needs to bear in mind not only the examination of carefully prepared

⁴⁶ A. T. Jones, “The Third Angel’s Message,” *General Conference Bulletin*, vol. 5, No. 17, February 26, 1893.

⁴⁷ Leslie N. Pollard, “Saga and Song: African American Preaching,” *Ministry*, 5-9; Calvin B. Rock, “Black SDA Preaching: Betwixt & Between,” *Ministry*, September 2000, 5-10; R. Clifford Jones, *Preaching with Power: Black Preachers Share Secrets for Effective Preaching* (Silver Spring, MA: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, 2005).

manuscripts, but most importantly a study of actual discourses where the elements of enthusiasm, freshness and interaction are conveyed more clearly.

Coming back to our brief historical survey of Adventist preaching, we notice that with the passing of time, the number of ministers increased and the nature of their work changed. From itinerant evangelists and pastors, most ministers became settled pastors, with oversight over a few churches in a relatively small geographical area.

Another important fact to bear in mind is that preaching in Adventism is not limited to ministers. As many as 30% of the preaching in North America and 80% worldwide is done by lay preachers, both men and women.⁴⁸

4.2.1.2 Characteristics of Adventist Preaching.

What characterizes Adventist preaching? An incident in the life of James White can fairly explain its essence. James White recalls as a young preacher how, at the close of one of the meetings, “the power of God came upon me to that degree I had to support myself with both hands hold of [sic] the pulpit. It was a solemn hour. As I viewed the condition of sinners, lost without Christ, I called on them with weeping, repeating several times, ‘Come to Christ, sinner . . . before it shall be too late . . . come.’”⁴⁹

James White’s earlier admonition on preaching the Word and this recorded pulpit experience illustrate and illuminate the core of Adventist preaching. To better understand Adventist preaching, we will offer the following definition: Adventist preaching is the urgent proclamation of God’s Word in the eschatological context of the imminent *Parousia* in an effort to bring people to Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁸ According to their “2017 Annual Statistical Report for 2015 and 2016,” accessed August 14, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2017.pdf>, 30,143 frontline pastors (evangelistic and pastoral employees) serve 151,461 congregations.

⁴⁹ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:87.

Succinctly put, Adventist preaching aims to be (1) Bible-centred, (2) urgent and (3) Spirit-led.

4.2.1.2.1 Bible-Centred

The fundamental and authoritative nature of the Scriptures forms the basis of Adventist doctrines⁵⁰ and accordingly informs their preaching. Adventist preachers use their personal Bibles in the pulpit and church members bring their own Bibles to church despite the availability of pew Bibles. This probably illustrates their deep personal attachment to their own Bible and to its use in corporate worship. In Adventist worship, God is seen to be present among His people, revealing Himself especially in the reading and preaching of His Word. The sermon is received with the understanding that it is a Word that has been divinely given. However, “[t]he preacher is not an oracle. He is a fellow seeker charged with articulating the questions his people are asking, and with framing the answers the Bible gives.”⁵¹ It is hence the duty of the preacher to make God’s Word known, understood and experienced by the congregation.⁵²

⁵⁰ Seventh-day Adventists consider the Holy Scriptures as “the infallible revelation of [God’s] will ... the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 11). As early as 1847, James White stated that the Bible is “a perfect and complete revelation” and “our only rule of faith and practice.” James White, *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (Brunswick, ME: n.p., 1847), 13.

⁵¹ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 121.

⁵² This might explain the recent emphasis on expository preaching in Adventist publications. For instance, *Ministry* (the international journal for pastors published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church) has in the last decades regularly dedicated articles that stress that preaching should be fundamentally expository. Most recent articles include: Ranko Stefanovic, “The Book of Revelation: Guidelines for Responsible and Meaningful Preaching,” *Ministry*, September 2017, 9-12; Jud Lake, “Expository Homiletics,” *Ministry*, January 2005, 18-20; Grant Swank, Jr. and Floyd Bresee, “Expository Preaching,” *Ministry*, January 1994, 7-10; Tom Dombrowski, “‘I Will Send a Famine’: An Interview with Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr.,” *Ministry*, July-August 2010, 30-31; Graeme S. Bradford, “Making Expository Preaching Relevant and Interesting,” *Ministry*, September 2000, 26-29; J. Grant Swank Jr., “Excitement About Expository Preaching,” *Ministry*, May 2000, 28-29; George R. Knight, “When Persecuted in One Text, Flee to the Next,” *Ministry*, May 1998, 7-9; Rex Daniel Edwards, “The Art of Expository Preaching,” *Ministry*, December 1994, 5-7; William G. Johnsson, “The Art of Expository Preaching,” *Ministry*, May 1994, 6-9. However, articles on expository preaching have been published in this magazine as far as 1948. See for

But how do Adventists interpret the Bible? For a typical answer, we may turn to Ellet J. Waggoner, an influential preacher in the early days of the Adventist Church. In an editorial, entitled “The Bible, Commentaries and Tradition,” published in 1887, he recapitulates and synthetises the previous Adventist understanding of Bible interpretation.⁵³ In his article, Waggoner shares three basic rules of interpretation based on his belief in the full authority and reliability of the Bible as well as its coherence and harmony: (1) The Bible explains itself and has to be understood in its own terms; (2) Interpretation involves apprehending the Bible as a connected whole; (3) Interpretation also involves paying close attention to recurrent terms.

Two observations emerge from this brief summary. Waggoner first finds it necessary to underline the importance of paying attention to what the Bible actually says. Second, he approaches the Word of God as a coherent and harmonious system of truth in which different sections and books explain each other. This search for the inner logic of Scripture has informed Adventist theology and Adventist preaching from the start.⁵⁴ Although Seventh-day Adventists accept human influences on the Bible, such as its cultural and worldview contexts, they generally do not subscribe to the historico-critical method, opting for the historico-biblical instead.⁵⁵

example Roy Allan Anderson, “What Is Expository Preaching?” *Ministry*, May 1948, 46, 48. See also D. A. Delafield, “Wanted: More Expository Sermons,” *Ministry*, December 1969, 24-27.

⁵³ Ellet J. Waggoner “The Bible, Commentaries, and Tradition,” *The Signs of the Times*, 12 (1886), 13.

⁵⁴ See for example, Marcos Blanco, “Early Adventists’ Homiletical Principles and the Expository-vs-Thematic Sermons Discussion,” *DavarLogos XVI*, 1 (2017): 29-60. Received from author. http://www.academia.edu/32964563/_Early_Adventists_Homiletical_Principles_and_the_Expository-vs-Thematic_Sermons_Discussion_DavarLogos_XVI_1_2017_29-60.

⁵⁵ See for instance Richard M. Davidson, “Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understanding of Seventh-day Adventist Hermeneutics,” *Biblical Research Institute General*

But where is the centre of that inner logic of Scripture? Ellen White states: “In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.”⁵⁶ Indeed, if theological reflection is to be centred in Christ and on the cross in particular, it follows then that preaching too finds its centre in the crucified Christ. E.J Waggoner made this clear in a sermon addressed to the leadership of the Adventist Church in 1903:

You and I may go over all the world, and we may preach, we may preach earnestly, but if our preaching is not the preaching of the Lord Jesus, literally the preaching of the Lord Jesus, that is to say, not simply the preaching about Him, but the Lord Jesus Himself preaching, then either we shall have to go over the ground again, or somebody else will have to go over it after us.⁵⁷

Edward Heppenstall captured a similar idea when he wrote: “No preacher can preach the Word who does not unlock its treasures with the true and only Key, which is Christ.”⁵⁸ Accordingly, Adventists aim to have “Christ-centred pulpits for Christ-centred people.”⁵⁹ However, the preaching of the gospel does not negate the preaching of the law since both gospel and law are a reflection of God’s character.⁶⁰ To preach the gospel without the law is to preach forgiveness without repentance and salvation without

Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, May 2003, accessed February 8, 2018
<https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/interp%20scripture%20davidson.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Ellen White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 315.

⁵⁷ E. J. Waggoner, “The Gospel of the Kingdom” *The General Conference Bulletin* 5, March 30, 1903.

⁵⁸ Edward Heppenstall, “Preaching with Power,” *Ministry*, August 1951, 4-6.

⁵⁹ Mervyn Warren, ‘Christ-Centered pulpits for Christ-Centered People’ (a sermon preached at Oakwood College), *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 1991, 181-187.

⁶⁰ Aecio E. Caïrus, “Is the Adventist Faith Legalistic?” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 7/2 (Autumn 1996): 33.

obedience. Adventists preach “Christ in the law,”⁶¹ because the Gospel includes a call to ethical obedience. The challenge for Adventist preachers is to preach such messages that will lead worshippers to stay away from the pitfalls of legalism and licentiousness.⁶²

4.2.1.2.2 *Urgent Proclamation*

In 1904, Ellen White asserted: “Not with tame, lifeless utterances is the message to be given, but with clear, decided, stirring utterances.”⁶³ More than half a century later, Robert H. Pierson, a senior Adventist Church leader stated: “Our preaching must be characterized by an urgency in keeping with the lateness of the hour and the solemnity of our responsibility.”⁶⁴

It is this sense of urgency that fuels Adventist mission and proclamation. From their earliest beginnings, Adventists have viewed themselves as carrying God’s last message of warning to the world as represented in Revelation 14:6-12.⁶⁵ Their particular reading of this apocalyptic passage influences and shapes their preaching.⁶⁶ According to

⁶¹ See for instance, Ellen White’s article in the *Review & Herald*, March 11, 1890.

⁶² Raymond Holmes, “Balanced Preaching: Avoiding the Extremes of Legalism and Licentiousness,” *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, 1990, 76-77.

⁶³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:16.

⁶⁴ Robert H. Pierson, “Never Loose Your sense of Urgency,” *Ministry*, December 1961, 17.

⁶⁵ This sense of urgency is reflected in their current Mission Statement: “The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting gospel embraced by the three angels’ messages (Revelation 14:6-12), and to prepare the world for Christ’s soon return,” accessed February 20, 2018, <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/-/mission-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/>. For the historical theological development of the three angels’ messages among early Adventists, see Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977).

⁶⁶ Judson Lake, “Preaching the Word of God for the People of God: A Proposed Definition of Seventh-day Adventist Preaching,” in Ron Du Preez, Philip G. Samaan, and Ron E.M. Couzet, eds., *The Word of God for the People of God: A Tribute to the Ministry of Jack J. Blanco* (Collegedale, TN: School

Charles E. Bradford “in Adventist preaching and theology, all sermons and doctrines wind up somewhere in the neighborhood of this threefold message” of Revelation 14.⁶⁷

At the heart of Revelation 14:6-12 is an appeal for a return to the basic principles and foundations of worship, beginning with an emphasis on the identity of God as Creator, Saviour and Sovereign Judge.⁶⁸

For Adventists, the design of the sermon is not simply to share biblical information, important as that might be, but to urge sinners to salvation and believers to holiness of life. The ultimate aim of Adventist preaching is to enable the congregation to experience a salvific encounter with the living God in light of the imminent return of Christ in glory.⁶⁹

This sense of urgency leads Adventists to be committed to evangelism even during the worship service. In line with the frontier tradition, worship and evangelism often coalesce. For instance, members are encouraged to bring visitors to allow them an opportunity to hear the Word of God.⁷⁰ In addition, churches regularly set aside special Sabbaths for visitors where the sermon tends to be even more evangelistic in nature.

The sense of urgency not only shapes the content of the sermon but also characterizes its delivery. The sermon needs to be spoken in understandable language and

of Religion, Southern Adventist University, 2004), 467-494; Charles E. Bradford, *Preaching to the Times* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1993).

⁶⁷ Charles E. Bradford, *Preaching to the Times: The Preaching Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Springs, MD: Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993), 13.

⁶⁸ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 192-197.

⁶⁹ See for instance, C. Raymond. Holmes, *The Last Word: An Eschatological Theology of Preaching* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987).

⁷⁰ *Church Manual*, 2015, 121.

convincing tone so that the congregation can grasp its meaning and be grasped by its transformative power. The focus is not so much on erudition as on spiritual transformation.⁷¹ How the preacher initially appropriates the Word affects the way in which he later communicates it.⁷² This is why the preacher is encouraged to pray earnestly and to saturate himself with the Scriptures so that he can proclaim God's Word as clearly as possible.⁷³ The preacher must seek God's presence in his life and in his sermon preparation. Norval Pease puts it this way: "*God does not meet the preacher in the pulpit. He meets him in his study and accompanies him to the pulpit.*"⁷⁴ The assumption here is that God continues to speak to His people through consecrated vessels.

4.2.1.2.3 Spirit-Led Preaching

In order to be a message from the Lord, the sermon must come from the Bible and rely on the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. As such, preaching is differentiated from ordinary speech because it is molded and delivered through the activity of God's Spirit. H. M. S. Richards captured this notion in his 1957 lectures on preaching: "Now, there is something supernatural about true preaching . . . preaching in which the preacher is filled with the Word of God, is empowered by the Holy Spirit, and speaks forth from a heart on

⁷¹ H. M. S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 19.

⁷² H. Evans, *The Preacher and His Preaching* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald, 1938).

⁷³ Derek J. Morris, "Preaching from the Overflow: An Interview with Barry Black" in *Powerful Biblical Preaching: Practical Pointers by Master Preachers*, Trilogy Scripture Resources, 2012. Originally published in *Ministry*, March 2004.

⁷⁴ Norval Pease, *And Worship Him*, 51. Italics in the original.

fire with the Word of Christ to hungry souls. That is preaching!”⁷⁵ For Richards, authentic preaching can only be done “under the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁶

God’s presence is seen as essential to the proclamation of His Word with the understanding that “it is the efficiency of the Holy Spirit that makes the ministry of the Word effective.”⁷⁷ Left to himself, the preacher is unable to bring any transformation to the congregation. “In order for preaching to be effective, it must be Holy Spirit actuated.”⁷⁸ It is the Spirit who uses the preacher, not the other way round.⁷⁹ Divine sovereignty is strongly acknowledged while the preacher’s dependence upon God’s leading is strongly affirmed.

The unction of the Holy Spirit is important for Adventists. Good preaching takes place where there is an interaction that takes place between the preacher, the congregation, and the Holy Spirit during the sermon. Only then can the sermon especially speak to the needs of the congregation through sound instruction and vital edification.

Within this understanding, God is seen to be revealing Himself primarily through His Word. This sets out the idea of worship as a response to God’s revelation, laying special emphasis upon our response to the Gospel.⁸⁰ The primary function of “the

⁷⁵ H. M. S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 120.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁷⁷ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1915), 155.

⁷⁸ Derek J. Morris, “Called to Preach.” An interview with E. E. Cleveland and Benjamin Reaves, *Trilogy Scripture Resources*, 2012, 28. Originally published in *Ministry*, December 2006.

⁷⁹ Derek J. Morris, “Preaching from the Overflow: An Interview with Barry Black.”

⁸⁰ *Church Manual*, 2015, 40.

message” or the preaching of the Word of God is to transmit the Good News, ultimately leading to a life of praise and adoration.

One might naturally think of the “message from the Word of God” as primarily divine while the response in praise and adoration as primarily human. However, the reality is not as straightforward. Although not explicitly stated in the *Church Manual*, God is understood to be involved in both Word and response through the agency of the Holy Spirit.⁸¹ The Word cannot be proclaimed and the response cannot be made unless God is involved.

In a special way, the sermon represents the voice of God in Adventist worship. The sermon helps the congregation to understand that God is still present and active in its midst as Christ is lifted up in the power of the Spirit. A common plea in the pastoral prayer is to ask God to bless the preacher in such a way that he can be used as an instrument in the blessing and transformation of the worshipping community.

The sermon is doxological in nature because, it centres on God and is addressed on behalf of God.⁸² Through the faithful preaching and submissive hearing and personal applying of the Word of God, the sermon becomes an act of worship.

4.2.2 Singing

You will see your Lord a coming,

You will see your Lord a coming,

You will see your Lord a coming,

In a few more days,

While a band of music,

⁸¹ Ibid., 119.

⁸² Norval Pease, *And Worship Him*, 84-85.

*While a band of music,
While a band of music,
Shall be chanting through the air.*

Those are the words of the popular Millerite hymn that James White sang, “to call the people to order” in Litchfield in 1842 as he made his way to the pulpit.⁸³ Reflecting years later on the meeting, he wrote: “The reader certainly cannot see poetic merit in the repetition of these simple lines . . . But it is a fact that there was in those days a power in what was called Advent singing, such as was felt in no other.”⁸⁴ James White and the Millerites did not see the Lord come in 1844 as they had expected. Yet, Adventists over the years have kept expressing their faith and hope through singing.⁸⁵

As we continue exploring the liturgical practices of Adventists to understand their theological meaning, we will now explore hymn singing. Hymns represent an important section of the liturgical and theological tradition of any denomination. They open for us a window through which we can explore both liturgical practice and theological meaning. As with preaching, there is a need to go beyond the printed words and pay special

⁸³ For a thorough analysis of this hymn from a liturgical theology perspective, see David Williams, *A Methodology for the Meaning of Worship Music with a Case Study of an Early Adventist Hymn*, “You Will See Your Lord A-Coming,” (Paper presented at Andrews University, November 2011). Accessed at Center of Adventist Research Center, James White Library, Andrews University.

⁸⁴ James White, *Life Incidents*, 1:94-95.

⁸⁵ Michael W. Campbell, “A Holy Spell: Worshipping with Early Adventists,” *Adventist Review*, October 22, 2009, 26–28.

attention to actual congregational singing⁸⁶ in an effort to better interpret the meaning of Adventist worship.

4.2.2.1 Adventist Hymnody.

“It may be said that the Seventh-day Adventist faith was born to music.”⁸⁷ All its founders loved to sing. Even before their official organisation in 1863, Adventists, despite their small numbers, had already published a plethora of hymnals between 1849 and 1862.⁸⁸ The early Adventist hymnological output was not the work of a worship committee but of one man, James White, who edited five hymnals and four supplements for the nascent Adventist movement.

The first hymnal, *Hymns for God’s Peculiar People that Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*, a clear reference to Revelation 14:12 comprised of 53 hymns. The hymnbook consisted only of words without music, an indication of their familiarity to Adventist believers. The hymnbook did not include the name of the authors or composers of the various hymns, a common practice at that time. As the title indicates, the hymnal reveals much of the liturgical and theological impulses and principles of early

⁸⁶ See for instance, Mary E. McGann, “Exploring Music as Worship and Theology,” ed., Edward Foley, *American Essays in Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 13-36. Christopher Ellis, *Gathering*, 150-151.

⁸⁷ Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-Day Adventists* (Washington, DC: The Review and Herald, 1962), 2:135.

⁸⁸ For an historical overview of early Adventist singing, see James R. Nix, *Early Advent Singing: A Collection of 52 Early Adventist Hymns with Illustrating Stories* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994); Ronald D. Graybill, “Singing and Society: The Hymns of the Saturday-keeping Adventists, 1849-1863,” Paper written for the Department of History, Johns Hopkins University, 1974; Ronald D. Graybill, “A Hymn of Joy: Enthusiasm and Celebration in Early Adventist Hymnody,” *Adventist Heritage* 14 (Fall 1991), 28-33. Arthur W. Spalding, “Hymns of the Advent” in *Origin and History of the Seventh-day Adventists*, Vol. 2. (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1962), 2:129-139; Raimo Jaakko Lehtinen, “An Organizational Model for a Coordinated Program of Music Ministry for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America and Europe,” PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MIL Andrews University, 1992), 42-62; Michael Campbell, “A Holy Spell: Worshipping with early Adventists,” *Adventist Review*, October 22, 2009, 26-28.

Adventism with a strong emphasis on its distinctiveness in comparison to other denominations. In essence, hymns were chosen to champion the Adventist faith and encourage the believers.

The first hymnal with music was published in 1855 and was entitled *Hymns for Those Who keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*, once again a reference to Revelation 14:12. It contained 435 hymns and 76 tunes and “was designed to promote not only public worship, but also social and family devotion.”⁸⁹ The addition of new hymns and the inclusion of musical notes aimed to “promote uniformity and correctness in singing among the scattered churches.”⁹⁰ As in other hymnals,⁹¹ James White solicited readers of the *Review and Herald* to send him “good hymns, original and select.”⁹² Although compiled by one man, the hymnal was in reality the work of the whole body of believers.

The year 1869 marks the release of the first official hymnal compiled by the newly organised Seventh-day Adventist Church (1863). It was entitled *Hymns and Tunes for Those Who Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*. It contained 536 hymns and 125 tunes. In contrast to previous hymnals, the work of compiling the hymnal was not done by James White but by a duly appointed committee. The preface states: “Our object has been to select and prepare hymns of worth and poetic merit, which express the faith and hope of the church, as set forth in the Scriptures of truth, and which

⁸⁹ *Review & Herald*, January 23, 1855, no. 21, 165.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ See for instance, “A Hymn Book,” *Review & Herald*, 2, November 25, 1851, 56; *Review & Herald*, January 22, 1861, 80; *Review & Herald*, April 13, 1876.

⁹² “The New Hymn Book,” *Review & Herald* 5, 1854, 176. See also “The New Hymn Book,” *Review & Herald* 6, February 20, 1855, 183.

are free from the prevailing errors of the age.” The hymnbook drew heavily from a number of stalwart hymns of the Methodist and Baptist traditions from which many Adventists came.⁹³ Over the years, hymns written by Adventists have been relatively few.⁹⁴

4.2.2.2 The 1941 Hymnal: Transition Point.

The 1941 *Church Hymnal* marked an important transition point in Adventist hymnody. It contained 703 hymns.⁹⁵ Lowell Mason was represented with 45 hymns, Charles Wesley had 27 and Fanny Crosby 23. The only Adventist with a substantial number of hymns was Frank Belden with 24 hymns.⁹⁶ Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Handel, Mozart, amongst other famous composers, made their entrance into the Adventist hymnal, bringing a new musical culture in the Adventist Church. This shift reflected the adoption of a wider liturgical culture but probably also an aspiration for social conformism and respectability.⁹⁷

Unsurprisingly, the 1941 *Hymnal* encountered some resistance. Adventists were polarized into two distinct camps. On the one hand, some did not like the new hymnal because it had too many “high church” English hymns. On the other hand, others

⁹³ Raimo Jaakko Lehtinen, *An Organizational Model for a Coordinated Program of Music Ministry for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North American and Europe*, PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1992), 46.

⁹⁴ Charles Pierce, *A History of Music and Music Education of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, D.M.A Dissertation (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America), 128.

⁹⁵ For a brief analysis of every hymn in the 1941 hymnal, see Edward E. White, *Singing with Understanding* (Warburton, Australia: Signs Publishing, 1981).

⁹⁶ Wayne W. Hooper and Edward. E. White, *Companion to Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1988), 36.

⁹⁷ See Viviane Haenni, *The Colton Celebration Congregation*, 46-50.

complained that the hymnal contained too many “cheap” gospel songs,⁹⁸ an indication of an inner struggle between staying close to denominational roots and the desire to embrace a wider spectrum of Christian hymnody. Even in 1967, Norval Pease noted that some still held “that only the finest in church music, as evaluated by professional musicians, should ever be used in the church service” while most congregations would choose “the gospel hymn and the more rhythmic, sentimental type of music.”⁹⁹ Accordingly, Pease advocated that pastors should never lose the ability to identify with the musical culture of the majority of church members in their aspiration at reaching high aesthetics standards.¹⁰⁰

4.2.2.3 The Latest Adventist Hymnal.

Despite its initial unpopularity, the 1941 hymnal was used for over forty years until the call for a new hymnal started echoing in Adventist circles. Those sentiments were reflected in an article, in which Wayne Hooper and Bernard E. Seton expressed a need for a new hymnal where Adventism’s distinctive doctrines would be reflected more adequately. Hooper and Seton wrote: “The Sabbath, Second Coming, judgment, sanctuary, and the priesthood of Christ are some of the subjects we need to sing more about.”¹⁰¹

This need was addressed in the latest denominational hymnal published in 1985, *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*. It retained 330 items from the 1941 hymnal and introduced “new” hymns drawn from Protestant hymnody. Adventists wrote 85 out of the

⁹⁸ Wayne W. Hooper and E. E. White, *Companion to Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, 36.

⁹⁹ Norval Pease, *And Worship Him*, 72.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 75-76.

¹⁰¹ Wayne Hooper and Bernard E Seton, “Is it Time for a New Hymnal?” in *Ministry* 54, April 1981, 11.

695 hymns.¹⁰² The hymnal also includes a selection of 225 responsive readings and worship aids, organised thematically.

Faithful to the Adventist tradition, the collections of hymns followed a survey that was sent to more than 3,000 active pastors, asking them to mark which hymns they would like to retain from the old hymnal, and to list any new songs and hymns they would like included. Some of the criteria used included familiarity, theological soundness, doctrinal sensitivity, cultural sensitivity and contextual appropriateness.¹⁰³

4.2.2.4 The Practice of Singing.

The official collections and arrangements of Adventist hymnals reveal much of their church's liturgical and theological impulses and principles. Yet, they reveal only one face of Adventist singing. The act of singing also needs to be taken into consideration.

4.2.2.4.1 Early Adventist Singing

Early Adventists loved to sing. It gave expression to their faith in Christ and their hope in His soon return. They sang everywhere and often, usually unaccompanied by musical instruments.¹⁰⁴ Such singing found its best expression in the family setting where Scripture reading, prayer and singing were the main ingredients. This is how Ellen G. White describes the family worship in her home: "We read a chapter in the Bible, sing a few verses, then everyone prays. Then we have a half-hour for singing again."¹⁰⁵ As such, singing occupied the largest section of family worship.

¹⁰² Wayne W. Hooper and E. E. White, *Companion to Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, 671.

¹⁰³ Wayne W. Hooper and E. E. White, *Companion to Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, 41.

¹⁰⁴ James White, "Music," *Review & Herald*, June 17, 1880.

¹⁰⁵ Ellen G. White, *Letter 23b*, 1887.

Singing also played a very important role in corporate worship, especially because of the rarity of preaching. Hymnals were published regularly “to promote order and harmony in singing.”¹⁰⁶ Yet, public worship through hymns often meant loud singing that lacked order and propriety.¹⁰⁷ “Uniformity and correctness in singing”¹⁰⁸ proved to be a challenge for enthusiastic but musically uneducated church members. Joseph Clarke, an Adventist minister commented thus on a conference he attended:

[W]hen we sang; one prolonged a quarter note, until it consumed the time of a whole note, with a hold and swell besides. Some were singing one verse, until others had progressed pretty well into the next; and the ending word of each verse echoed and reechoed, each according to the different notions of propriety, which each locality administered for itself, with the evident idea that such notions were standard.¹⁰⁹

Because of the inability of many congregations to match volume, rhythms and keys, Joseph Clarke again reiterated his complaint in 1862 in another letter to the *Review and Herald* in which he observed that often “good lungs, and uncultivated ears go together.”¹¹⁰ According to Clarke, harmonious singing could only be achieved if worshippers pay attention to the song leader, listen to the singing of others and seek to blend their voices with the general harmony.¹¹¹ For him, congregational singing meant practicing attentiveness to others rather than being absorbed in one’s own musical performance.

¹⁰⁶ *Review & Herald*, March 20, 1855, 200.

¹⁰⁷ *Review & Herald*, July 10, 1855, 4; *Review & Herald*, November 25, 1858, 1.

¹⁰⁸ *Review & Herald*, January 23, 1855, 165.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Clarke, “Music,” *Review & Herald*, November 10, 1859.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Clarke, “Congregational Singing,” *Review & Herald*, June 24, 1862, 29.

¹¹¹ *Review & Herald*, June 24, 1862, 29.

While lacking in music elegance, some observed that Adventist singing, “effectually engages the hearts of the congregation.”¹¹² James White was quick to point out that those who questioned such enthusiastic singing did so because they were “lukewarm, deceived” and “hardened.”¹¹³ White considered total, unaffected participation of ardent worshippers as of paramount importance.

Since many of the believers were uneducated farmers who could not read, the hymns used were normally simple and the song leader would normally line out the hymns.¹¹⁴ Ministers would also sometimes read the whole hymns before the congregation would join in singing. This was considered an important element of worship, so much so that ministers were expected to prepare themselves seriously so that they could use proper voice projection while guarding “against didactic style, gestures and theatrics in the reading of hymns.”¹¹⁵

4.2.2.4.2 Current Adventist Singing

Music still occupies an important role in Adventist worship today. Highlighted below in italics are the elements that require music for both the regular order of worship and shorter order of worship:

Regular Order of Service:

Organ Prelude
Announcements
Choir and Ministers Enter
Doxology
Invocation
Scripture Reading
Hymn of Praise

¹¹² Worship in Singing, *Review & Herald*, February 2, 1860, 63.

¹¹³ James White, “The Immediate Coming of Christ,” *Review & Herald*, January 20, 1853, 141.

¹¹⁴ James White, *Life Incidents* vol.1, Chapter 5; *Review & Herald*, 31 1868, 198-199.

¹¹⁵ *Review & Herald*, September 2, 1884, 171.

Prayer
Anthem or Special Music
Offering
Hymn of Consecration
Sermon
Hymn
Benediction
Congregation Standing or Seated for a Few Moments of Silent Prayer
Organ Postlude

Shorter Order of Worship:

Announcements
Hymn
Prayer
Offering
Hymn or Special Music
Sermon
Hymn
Benediction
Congregation Standing or Seated for Silent Prayer

The 2015 *Church Manual* urges worshippers to sing with spirit and understanding.¹¹⁶ Special attention is paid to those who lead in worship. Music coordinators, choirs and musicians are to be carefully selected.¹¹⁷ They should be “thoroughly consecrated and provide appropriate music for all church worship services and meetings,” working closely with the pastor or elder in ensuring that the music harmonizes with the sermon.¹¹⁸ Recognizing the sacred nature of church music, churches are not to use “secular music or that of a questionable nature.”¹¹⁹ Choir members are to be

¹¹⁶ *Church Manual*, 2015, 118.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

¹¹⁸ *Church Manual*, 2015, 94.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

church members who are biblically principled, spiritually minded and exemplary in modesty and decorum.¹²⁰

Although a good number of congregations retain a conservative style, using hymns and structures outlined in the *Church Manual*, more and more churches are moving to blended services where traditional hymns and contemporary choruses coexist. Very few churches have chosen to do away totally with the *Adventist Hymnal*.

4.2.2.5 Theology in Hymnals.

Nicholas P. Wolstertorff has observed that hymns express more concretely the more abstract ideas that define both Christian belief and Christian community.¹²¹ Richard Mouw describes church's music and songs as "compacted theology."¹²² Hymns express the faith of a worshipping community. For Paul Westermeyer, a hymnal "is a synthetic theological manual."¹²³ Elsewhere, he writes that "in music, the faith and life of a people take flesh."¹²⁴

Apparently, some of those hymns sung in Adventist churches did not square well with their theology. For example, in an article written in 1882, N. J. Bowers, aware of music's heuristic values, warned of the habit of Adventists getting attached to popular

¹²⁰ Ibid., 95.

¹²¹ Nicholas Wolstertorff, "Thinking about Church Music," in *Music in Christian Worship: At the Service of the Liturgy*, ed. Charlotte Kroeker (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 5.

¹²² Richard J. Mouw, *Introduction to Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American History and Theology*, eds., Richard Mouw and Mark Noll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), xiii-xiv.

¹²³ Paul Westermeyer, "A Hymnal's Theological Significance," in *Dialog*, 48, December 2009, 313.

¹²⁴ Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 5.

hymns instead of first weighing their lyrics.¹²⁵ He admonished that “[o]ne can no more sing an error than he can preach it or believe it.”¹²⁶

This problem was not unique to Bowers’ time. Years earlier, young Adventist hymn writer, Annie R. Smith, had emphasised that any text sung in Adventist worship should harmonize with Adventist theology. In an article written in 1854, she recommended that “a pure theology should be sustained by pure hymns.”¹²⁷ Both Bowers and Smith recognised that there was always the danger that the lyrics sung could distort or contradict the message preached if they were not carefully evaluated. Some Adventists continue to sound the same cautionary note today.¹²⁸

One area that illustrates the tension between the theology and practice of singing is related with the doctrine of the Trinity. Seventh-day Adventists have not always been Trinitarian.¹²⁹ In fact, two of their founders, Joseph Bates and James White, were originally members of the Christian Connection Church, a denomination known for its

¹²⁵ *Review & Herald*, August 8, 1882, 500.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Review & Herald*, May 1854, or *Review & Herald*, April 25, 1854.

¹²⁸ For instance, Liliane Doukhan, stresses that “sacred music conveys a theology” (p. 52) and that “it must tell about the values and beliefs of a group” (p. 53). She also emphasises the necessity of lyrics that not only have “theological correctness, but [also] depth, meaningfulness, directness, and poetic quality.” *In Tune with God* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House Publishing, 2010), 227.

¹²⁹ For an analysis of early Adventist anti-Trinitarianism, see Merlin D. Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* 17.1 (2006): 125–139; Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 1: Historical Overview,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41:1 (2003): 113–129; idem, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of E. G. White,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41:2 (2003): 275–292. Gilbert M. Valentine, Learning and Unlearning: A Context for Important Developments in the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of the Trinity, 1888–1898, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 213–236. Jerry Moon, “Trinity and Anti-Trinitarianism in Seventh-day Adventist History,” in Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 190–203; Gerhard Pfandl, The Doctrine of the Trinity Among Seventh-day Adventists, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17/1 (Spring 2006): 160–179.

staunch opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity. Having converted to Adventism, both Bates and White maintained their anti-Trinitarian views.¹³⁰ For instance, in an article written in 1855, White considered the Trinity as a fable.¹³¹ Yet, his anti-Trinitarianism did not prevent him from including the Doxology, “Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” in his compilation of the first hymnbook in 1849.¹³² In addition, referring to himself officiating in a baptismal service in 1857, White wrote “He led you down into the water, and there baptized you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”¹³³ Clearly, his leading in worship did not always line up with his declared theology.

This dichotomy between *lex credendi* and *lex orandi* could be explained by the fact that James White could not see the theological implications of his worship practices. It is good to remember that Adventism was not solely shaped by Christian Connection views. The bulk of their adherents and ministers were Methodists and Baptists who brought their own worship beliefs and practices into the Adventist movement. One of them, Ellen White, James’ wife, who grew up Methodist, is credited to have been the major figure to firmly stir Seventh-day Adventism to a Trinitarian position, mostly through her writings in the 1890s.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates*, Battle Creek: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868, 205.

¹³¹ *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1855, 85.

¹³² James White, comp., *Hymns for God’s Peculiar People, That Keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus*, Oswego, NY: Richard Oliphant, 1849, 47.

¹³³ *Adventist Review & Herald*, August 27, 1857, 134.

¹³⁴ See for instance, Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of E. G. White,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41:2, 2003, 275–292; Jerry Moon, “Ellen White’s Role in the Trinity Debate” in *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love*, pp. 204–220; Gerhard Pfandl, The Doctrine of the Trinity Among Seventh-day Adventists, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17/1 (Spring 2006): 160–179; Merlin Burt, 128–129. Ellen White’s book on the life of Christ, *The Desire of Ages*, published in 1898, consolidated this move by clearly declaring the eternal deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. See for

Yet, the ambivalence concerning the doctrine of the Trinity persisted. Despite the official statement in 1931 that “the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love,”¹³⁵ the 1941 *Church Hymnal* did not include the last stanza of the familiar hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy,” which ends with “God in three persons, blessed Trinity.”¹³⁶ A number of other hymns were also adjusted to exclude Trinitarian language.¹³⁷ Others however maintained them.¹³⁸ For instance, hymn number 9 of the 1941 *Church Hymnal* ends with the words “Praise ye the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Praise the Eternal Three.” In contrast to the previous hymnals, the latest Adventist hymnal, published in 1985, fully reinstated Trinitarian language in all the hymns concerned.

4.2.2.6 Spiritual and Liturgical Values.

What are the spiritual and liturgical values that undergird the practice of Adventist congregational singing? Three essential values are highlighted. It is congregational singing that emphasises: (i) hope; (ii) simplicity; (iii) community.

instance, pp. 19, 530, 671, 785 as listed by Denis Fortin in “God, The Trinity and Adventism: An Introduction to the Issues,” p. 9. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17:1, 2006, 9.

¹³⁵ *Yearbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*, 1931 (H.E Rogers, Washington, Review & Herald, 1931), 377.

¹³⁶ *The Church Hymnal*, Washington D.C, Review & Herald, 1941, 49.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, Hymns 10, 63, 487.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, Hymns 16, 286.

4.2.2.6.1 Hope

The theme of the blessed hope dominates the hymnals, especially the early editions.¹³⁹ More than half the hymns in the 1849 hymnal refer to the Christian life as a pilgrimage. The world is seen as a wilderness and believers as sojourners who, like the Israel of old, have left the land of captivity and are now on their way to their true home in heaven. Thus, the practice of singing is often a rehearsal of the anticipated future.¹⁴⁰

In his research on the 1849-1863 Adventist hymnals, Ron Graybill explains that it is difficult to understand the emotional impact of early Adventist hymnody without appreciating the circumstances in which the hymns were sung.¹⁴¹ Adventists suffered from a keen sense of alienation and of social rejection as a result of their religious beliefs. Their sense of alienation was geographical: the small Adventist membership was disseminated over the vast American territory. It was also religious: their connection to the Millerite movement and subsequent adoption of the Sabbath as their day of worship distanced them from other Christians. And social: they felt ostracized by the larger society because their apocalyptic eschatology differed with the culture at large. Adventists compensated for their sense of alienation every time they came together for meetings through the vigorous singing of Advent hymns that pointed to a better future.

¹³⁹ James White, *Hymns for God's Peculiar People*, 1849, (hymns 7, 15, 16, 19, 21-23, 24, 31, 36, 38, 39, 46, 50, 52).

¹⁴⁰ An analysis of their first hymnal (1849) reveals their sense of maladjustment. For instance, hymn 9, *The Better Land* speaks of Adventists as a "lonely pilgrim band, and weary, and worn, and sad"; hymn 22 mentions the journey to heaven as a warfare which will culminate in a place where "thy foes come no more"; hymn 25 declares "Here o'er the earth as a stranger I roam, Here is no rest—is no rest; Here as a pilgrim I wander alone, Yet I am blest—I am blest." The same theme of pilgrimage and alienation is found again in Hymn 36, *A Pilgrim and a Stranger* whereas Hymn 52 aspires to the heavenly Jerusalem asking the question: *Are we almost there?* This longing for heaven is even more intense because of the proximity of Christ's Second Coming, which is also well represented in the first hymnal.

¹⁴¹ Ronald D. Graybill, "Singing and Society: The Hymns of the Saturday-Keeping Adventists, 1849-1863" (Paper, Johns Hopkins University, 1974), accessed at Center of Adventist Research Center, James White Library, Andrews University.

Today, Adventists may not suffer the same sense of alienation but they continue to sing their hope in the soon coming of their Lord Jesus Christ. “Jesus is Coming Again” (SDA Hymnal 213), a favourite Adventist hymn, is an example:

1
*Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring:
Jesus is coming again!
Cheer up, ye pilgrims, be joyful and sing:
Jesus is coming again!*

Refrain
*Coming again, coming again,
Jesus is coming again!*

2
*Echo it, hilltops; proclaim it, ye plains:
Jesus is coming again!
Coming in glory, the Lamb that was slain;
Jesus is coming again!*

3
*Heavings of earth, tell the vast, wondering throng:
Jesus is coming again!
Tempests and whirlwinds, the anthem prolong;
Jesus is coming again!*

4
*Nations are angry—by this we do know
Jesus is coming again!
Knowledge increases; men run to and fro;
Jesus is coming again!*

Embedded in such songs is a statement on how Adventists view themselves - a pilgrim people waiting for God’s kingdom to manifest itself in its fullness at Christ’s return in glory.

4.2.2.6.2 *Simplicity*

Church music is for the glory of God and the edification of the body of Christ. As such, Adventists believe that simplicity is an important spiritual and liturgical value in the music that is offered in church. Ellen White believed for instance that the poorest congregation, without any musical instrument or superficialities could still offer the best

singing because of the joy of Christ in their souls.¹⁴² For Adventists, the most important element in congregational singing is whether the heart is in tune with God.¹⁴³

Extravagance in music is sometimes seen as a sign of abandonment of Gospel simplicity.

Annie Smith, a pioneer Adventist hymn writer puts it this way:

When people are humble, hymns are a solemn experience of faith rendered with pathos. When they have departed from their first love, no spiritual power attends song. If Satan cannot introduce positive corruption into the form of sacred song, he will seek to render it so elaborate and complicated and it's rendering so soulless, that it will fail as a medium of the Holy Spirit in the work of Grace.¹⁴⁴

For Adventists, church music is first and foremost an offering of the heart, not the performance of an art. This explains why Adventists, at first, excluded musical instruments from their worship, not because they considered instruments to be evil, but because the purchase of such instruments was perceived to be an extravagance in the face of the most urgent need of financing the mission work of the church.

An instance illustrating this fact was Ellen White's opposition to the purchase of a pipe organ in the Battle Creek Church on the ground that it was more essential "to help our brethren in foreign countries to erect churches" than buying "a costly organ, nothing for mere display."¹⁴⁵ The value of simplicity was also behind White's apprehension concerning those who viewed worship music as a performance rather than an offering to

¹⁴² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 508.

¹⁴³ Liliane Doukhan, *In Tune with God* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2010).

¹⁴⁴ *Review & Herald*, January 30, 1883, 67. George Butler, an early Adventist leader, expressed the same concerns when he highlighted the fact that congregational singing is a reflection of the church's spirituality. As the spirituality goes, so goes the music. George I. Butler, "Instrumental Music," *Review and Herald*, 1883, 329.

¹⁴⁵ Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 28, 1893, 13.

God.¹⁴⁶ Far from condemning choirs or soloists, she nevertheless expressed her concern when she wrote that “[i]n some of our churches I have heard solos that were altogether unsuitable for the service of the Lord's house.”¹⁴⁷ She deplored “the long-drawn-out notes and the peculiar sounds common in operatic singing.” Instead, she encouraged for “simple songs of praise sung in a natural tone”¹⁴⁸ in which every word is uttered clearly.

Those same values are presented in the current *Church Manual*.¹⁴⁹ Songs are to be offered in wondrous simplicity with a grateful heart to glorify God and edify the worshipper. This does not mean that Adventists enjoy simplistic or artless music. According to their *Church Manual* (quoting Ellen White), music should have “beauty, pathos and power.”¹⁵⁰ The fundamental issue is a matter of emphasis. For Adventists, the call to “Gospel simplicity” is a non-negotiable exhortation that needs to be reflected in every aspect of the Christian life, including the music offered in worship.¹⁵¹

4.2.2.6.3 Community

Church music expresses the faith of the community. Through singing, each worshipper engages with others to offer praises to God. This corporate offering to God challenges individualistic proclivities. In congregational singing, music and text confess the worshippers’ faith in God and their fellowship with one another.

¹⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:143-144.

¹⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 510.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 510.

¹⁴⁹ *Church Manual*, 2015, 121.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁵¹ *Church Manual*, 2015, 24, 121, 145-147.

Adventists emphasize congregational singing. Although church services may have instrumental music, choirs, groups or soloists, congregational singing is still considered the best expression of a meaningful congregational involvement in worship. Raymond Holmes puts it succinctly: “All church music is secondary to congregational singing.”¹⁵² Similarly, the *Church Manual* encourages, “The singing is not always to be done by a few. As much as possible, let the entire congregation join.”¹⁵³ As such, each and every member is called to active engagement rather than spectator passivity. “When we come together to worship the Lord, music should be rendered in the best possible way. All church members should be participants.”¹⁵⁴

The practice of singing together fuses the congregation into one community singing *one* song to express *one* faith and *one* hope. The ecclesial dimension of singing is important for Adventists as it helps shape congregational spirituality and worship. Through singing, they are reminded who they are, who their Lord is and where they are heading as heaven-bound pilgrims.

4.2.3 Prayer

A third way Adventists respond to God’s Word in corporate worship is through prayer. In public prayer, the worship leader speaks directly to God on behalf of the congregation.

¹⁵² C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 97.

¹⁵³ *Church Manual*, 2015, 118.

¹⁵⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “A Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Music,” accessed February 2, 2018, <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/-/a-seventh-day-adventist-philosophy-of-music/>.

In January 1932, Taylor Bunch, wrote an article in *Ministry* where he complained that it was not at all unusual to have from six to ten prayers being offered during the Sabbath school and church service. He asked the question: “Has not the time come for a reformation in regard to public prayer? Should we not greatly simplify our services, and reduce the number and length of our public petitions?”¹⁵⁵ The 1932 *Church Manual*, published a few months later, seems to have come as an answer to Bunch’s questions. It mentioned four kinds of prayers that should be present in corporate worship: (1) The Invocation; (2) The Pastoral Prayer; (3) Offertory Prayer; (4) The Benediction.¹⁵⁶ We consider each in turn.

4.2.3.1 Invocation.

Praying to God at the beginning of the worship service has always been an Adventist practice. Rather than using the term “invocation,” early Adventists most often used the expression “opening prayer.”¹⁵⁷ An extract from the *General Conference Bulletin* of May 1913 gives a record of such a prayer:

The exercises of the afternoon were of a most encouraging nature. Elder E. W. Farnsworth, in the opening prayer besought the God of Jacob to come near, and reveal himself to his waiting people with converting power. “Anoint our eyes,” he prayed, “that we may see what God would have us do. May we rise above the shadowy region of doubt and unbelief, and dwell in the sunlight of thy presence. Encourage and uplift, we pray.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Taylor G. Bunch, “Public Prayer,” *Ministry*, January 1932, 25.

¹⁵⁶ *Church Manual*, 1932, 151-152. Compare with E. J. Waggoner, *Sign of the Times*, June 8, 1888, 342.

¹⁵⁷ *Manuscript 29*, 1892, 26; *Letter 109*, 1903, 11; *General Conference Bulletin*, vol. 7, 1913, 2. *General Conference Bulletin*, May 18, 1913, 32.

¹⁵⁸ *General Conference Bulletin*, May 13, 1913.

This excerpt might not have recorded the totality of the prayer and yet it reflects the way in which Adventists offered the invocation with a plea for divine intervention. The above prayer, like the vast majority of Adventist prayers, was probably not written. Also, like many opening prayers in those days, it also served as a pastoral prayer.¹⁵⁹ Things changed over time and in 1967, Norval Pease was adamant that the invocation “is not another pastoral prayer.”¹⁶⁰

According to the *Adventist Minister's Handbook*, the invocation has two aims: it is to recognise and invite the presence of God.¹⁶¹ Implicit in this statement is that in every act of worship, it is the church that comes into God's presence when it assembles to give glory and praise to Him. God's presence is not “invoked,” in the sense of calling God to be where He is not. God is the One who invites us into His presence. By gathering together, the assembly responds to the initial divine invitation.

God is the Subject as well as the Object of our worship. As Subject, He invites and initiates our worship; as Object, He graciously receives our response through our praise and adoration. Yet, the assembly never takes God's presence for granted. The God who invites us asks us to invite Him into our midst. We deal here with a seeming contradiction, what Reformed theologian, Von Allmen calls “*the problem of the epiklesis*.”¹⁶² God is free and sovereign. We cannot control His presence.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ See for instance, E. J. Waggoner, *Signs of the Times*, March 3, 1887, 135; *General Conference Bulletin* May 16, 1913, 2.

¹⁶⁰ Norval Pease, *And Worship Him*, 67.

¹⁶¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, 2009), 124.

¹⁶² Jean-Jacques Von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 28.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 29-31. See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 63.

4.2.3.2 Pastoral Prayer.

The pastoral prayer is the time when the church becomes even more aware than ever that corporate worship is essentially an act of prayer. In most Adventist churches, kneeling is widely understood as the appropriate bodily posture to express reverence during pastoral prayer.

4.2.3.2.1 Elements of Pastoral Prayer

How is the pastoral prayer offered in an Adventist setting? On May 15, 1913, Adventists met under a large tent in Takoma Park, Washington D.C to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the official organisation of their denomination. John N. Loughborough, who had been a delegate at the organisation of the Adventist Church fifty years previously, offered the pastoral prayer. Here are a few extracts:

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, we thank thee that so many who have been adopted into thy family are permitted to assemble . . . We have abundant reasons for thanksgiving and praise to thee, as we have sung. Help us to realise that it is because of thy goodness and mercy that we are still here. We thank thee, Lord, for what thou hast done in gathering out a people . . .

We remember our faithlessness, our lack of energy, and that we might have been farther advanced if there had been that consecration that thou didst require . . .

. . . O Lord, we thank thee that thou hast forgiven the mistakes, and that thou art granting abundant blessings . . . Thou art here by thy Spirit to help in this meeting. O Lord, if ever we needed thy help and blessing and divine guidance, . . . O Lord, thou art ready to counsel, . . . So, Lord, we pray for divine guidance . . . Grant it, O Lord, to Brother Daniells, as president of the General Conference; grant it to the brethren of the different committees . . . O Lord, grant wisdom, we pray . . . Lord, we want the strength which thou has given us still to be used to thy glory . . . And, Lord, may it be the happy lot of each one of us to be so consecrated to thee . . . We ask it in Jesus' name.¹⁶⁴

As in the above example, elements, generally found in Adventist pastoral prayer include praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, intercession, requests, and dedication.

¹⁶⁴ *General Conference Bulletin*, May 16, 1913, 2.

Praise – The very essence of the pastoral prayer is praise. In gathering for worship, God’s people gather first of all to declare the glorious worthiness of God. Giving glory to God constitutes the main reason for the existence of the church and the essence of its worship. In acknowledging God for who He is, “prayer begins with adoration and a reverence for God and His holy name . . . It is at this point that real, effective prayer begins!”¹⁶⁵ This central element of praise is foundational to the act of pastoral prayer.

Thanksgiving – Another element of pastoral prayer is the expression of thanksgiving in response to God’s abundant blessings.¹⁶⁶ While it is not possible to draw a sharp distinction between praise and thanksgiving, Adventists tend to see praise as giving glory to God for who He is and thanksgiving for what He has done.¹⁶⁷ In giving thanks, the church acknowledges that “every good gift comes from God” (James 1:16). The pastoral prayer is also the time to thank God for His unspeakable gift in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 9:15).

Confession of Sin – In 1913, at the same meeting in Takoma Park attended by John Loughborough, S. N. Haskell offered another prayer and closed it with the following words: “We now commit ourselves to thee. Forgive us of our sins, we pray thee. Cover our backslidings, O God. Finally, when the work is over, and thou dost gather thy people, save us with them, we ask through Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.”¹⁶⁸ At least two fundamental theological truths are affirmed here. First, the act of confession recognises the sad reality of sin in the church and the necessity of being forgiven in order to enjoy

¹⁶⁵ C. M. Mellor, “The Content of the Pastoral Prayer (Concluded),” *Ministry*, April 1970, 21.

¹⁶⁶ *Minister’s Handbook*, 125.

¹⁶⁷ C. M. Mellor, “The Content of the Pastoral Prayer,” *Ministry*, April 1970, 22.

¹⁶⁸ *General Conference Bulletin*, May 16, 1913, 3.

the full benefits of salvation. Second, the act of confession takes seriously both the grace of God and the need for repentance. By faith, the church clings to the assurance of forgiveness and assurance and is willing to move forward in a renewed spirit of repentance and commitment to do God's will. The whole process relies on God's grace that leads the heart to genuine repentance.¹⁶⁹ Once again, it is God who initiates our response. In consequence, confession is offered with an assurance of pardon in a spirit of thanksgiving.

Intercession and Requests – As in the case of praise and thanksgiving, it is difficult to distinguish between intercession and requests. In the pastoral prayer, petition is offered for people outside the church (intercession) as well as for those within the household of faith (requests). The *Minister's Handbook* simply makes mention of “intercession in the affairs of the church, the community, and the nation,”¹⁷⁰ expressing the selfless nature of the church. Here the church clearly recognises that the function of worship surpasses the immediate setting of the assembly and includes the whole world.

The church does not exist only for itself. It exists also for the sake of the world for which it intercedes. This is how Ellen G. White puts it:

In calling God our Father, we recognise all His children as our brethren. We are all a part of the great web of humanity, all members of one family. In our petitions we are to include our neighbors as well as ourselves. No one prays aright who seeks a blessing for himself alone.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Ellen G. White, *Review & Herald*, June 24, 1884.

¹⁷⁰ *Minister's Handbook*, 125.

¹⁷¹ Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, 267.

Although distinct from the world, the church still stands in solidarity with the world. Intercession is offered on the assumption that God hears the prayer of His children on behalf of their fellow human beings and is willing to answer favourably.

Dedication – The sincerity of the entire prayer is validated by a commitment to service. “The proper climax of prayer is for us to commit and dedicate ourselves to the service and keeping of God.”¹⁷² Neither exuberant praise and thanksgiving, nor sorrowful confession and petition can replace the Christian’s duty. Dedication implies that the church lives under the lordship of Christ to whom it has been set aside to declare His glory. Closing the pastoral prayer “in Jesus’ name” implies the church’s dependence on Christ to do God’s will in conformity with the values of His eternal Kingdom.

4.2.3.3 Offertory Prayer.

Praying over the offering is another regular feature of public prayer in Adventist churches. This prayer occurs either prior to the giving of the offering or after collection. If initiated before the offering, the assembly usually remains seated while the worship leader prays standing. If the prayer follows the offering, some congregations stand and sing the doxology as the offering is brought forward, followed by the prayer of thanksgiving.¹⁷³ The prayer is generally short. As mentioned here, the prayer over the offering is a prayer of thanksgiving to God for his favors and blessings.¹⁷⁴

Thanksgiving arises in response to God’s generosity. By abounding in thanks, the church testifies that it does not take the spiritual or material blessings of God for granted. It is the grace of God that pours out the blessings and it is again the grace of God that

¹⁷² C. M Mellor, “The Content of Pastoral Prayer (concluded),” *Ministry*, April 1970, 22.

¹⁷³ *Minister’s Handbook*, 125.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

motivates the thanksgiving. By giving thanks, the church recognises that giving is not only a duty but also a joy.

4.2.3.4 Benediction.

In regard to benediction, the precursor to the *Church Manual*, H.M.S Richards' *Church Order* states: it is "**pronounced by the ministers only** . . . Local elders in concluding meetings which they conduct do so either by offering a short prayer to God . . . or by calling upon some other brother to pray such a prayer."¹⁷⁵ *Church Manuals* from 1932 up to now have never made this distinction of roles. Yet, this has been the practice in a large majority of Adventist congregations.

Although termed as a "prayer of benediction" in the *Adventist Church Manual*,¹⁷⁶ this prayer could most appropriately be called a closing prayer, the reason being simple. It is quite common for the minister to close the service by offering a prayer of dedication and then pronouncing the benediction, ritually raising his hands over the standing congregation.

In either case, the idea is that God's favour and continuous presence is necessary to the worshipping community for it to live out the Gospel in God's name during the week. The service of worship holds out a vision that the whole life is a life of worship (Rom. 12:1, 2) which needs to be lived for the glory of God and the blessing of humanity.¹⁷⁷ The act of blessing recognises God's presence in the church as in the world and His promise to accompany His people wherever they go.

¹⁷⁵ H. M. S. Richards, *Church Order*, 66. Bold in the original.

¹⁷⁶ *Church Manual*, 2015, 180.

¹⁷⁷ *Church Manual*, 2015, 121.

Indeed, it reinforces the idea that God is the One who empowers His people for faithful service in the world. The service of worship is meant to glorify God, bless His people and impact the world.

4.2.3.5 Spiritual and Liturgical Values of Public Prayer.

How do the core values of Adventist worship interact as the congregation prays? What spiritual and liturgical values are we able to ascribe to praying in Adventist corporate worship? We can identify four essential values: (i) sincerity; (ii) simplicity; (iii) reverence; (iv) community.

4.2.3.5.1 Sincerity

In 1860, Uriah Smith, one of the early leaders in Adventism, wrote an article¹⁷⁸ in which he rhetorically asks a simple question: “What is prayer? Is it the rehearsal on the bended knee of a set form of solemn words, learned by rote from the Bible, from the liturgy, or from the traditions of the elders?” He answers in the negative, arguing that such praying should be regarded as “*prayerless prayers*” [italics in the original].” Then he gives his definition of prayer. “True prayer,” he argues “is the direct and earnest converse of a soul with God.” Although Adventists today may not share Smith’s vehemence that reading prayers from a book is cold formalism, most would basically agree that prayer is a genuine heart conversation that comes from the inner depth of one’s spiritual experience.

Like in most Free Church denominations, there is no emphasis on a written liturgy within Adventism. Prayer is essentially extemporaneous, although this does not necessarily mean unplanned. Extemporaneous prayer requires preparation though for “the

¹⁷⁸ Uriah Smith, “Prayerless Prayers,” *Review & Herald*, October 23, 1860.

one who prays should have some idea as to what he is going to say before he opens his mouth.”¹⁷⁹ For sure, Adventist worship does not depend on a precise liturgy, well-read written prayers, or strict ceremony.¹⁸⁰ Instead, it relies mostly on the spiritual condition of the heart, especially of those who lead in worship. E. J. Waggoner made it absolutely clear in 1888 when he wrote: “The man who does not pray in secret, cannot offer an acceptable prayer in public.”¹⁸¹ To neglect private prayer is a sure sign of one’s inability and ineligibility to be the congregation’s spokesperson before God in public worship. Orley Berg echoed the same ideas almost a century later: “There must be passion in our praying. I do not mean sentimentalism, but intensiveness, earnestness, and spiritual enthusiasm. There must be warmth and life — a holy passion.”¹⁸²

The goal of worship is to draw people near to God and to have fellowship with Him and a pastoral prayer that fails in this respect is a great disfavour to the congregation. Adventists would question the genuineness of prayer that does not come from the heart.

4.2.3.5.2 *Simplicity*

Adventist congregational prayers are usually simple. They are devoid of procedural and ceremonial complexity because Adventist worship does not rely so much on the smooth performance of a ritual as on the intense spiritual engagement of the worshippers. Seventh-day Adventists believe that “the intensity of prayer is an important

¹⁷⁹ Norval Pease, *And Worship Him*, 67.

¹⁸⁰ Denis Fortin, “A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective on Worship” in Thomas F. Best, *Worship Today: Understanding Practice, Ecumenical Implications* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2004), 166-167.

¹⁸¹ *Signs of the Times*, March 2, 1888, 135.

¹⁸² Orley M. Berg, “The Pastoral Prayer,” *Ministry* 1971, 51.

factor, because the warmhearted prayer brings results.”¹⁸³ They are to “avoid clichés and continually heard phrases, and pray for something current and typical of the concerns and needs of [their] congregation.”¹⁸⁴ Unfortunately, this ideal is not always met in reality. In 1967, O. B. Kuhn decried that “sometimes the pastoral prayer is tedious, prosy, and superficial; it is unorganised, tame, and lifeless; it is dry, stale, and formal.”¹⁸⁵ What is needed is the congregation’s ability to understand the language used in prayer in order to meaningfully participate in it.¹⁸⁶

4.2.3.5.3 *Reverence*

An intrinsic attitude of acceptable prayer in Adventism is that of reverence. The spirit of reverence does not so much come from the magnificence of a church building or the elaborate nature of the liturgy. Rather, it comes from a clear understanding of the nature of God and His presence among His people.¹⁸⁷ Reverence toward God in public prayer follows from reverence in private prayer.¹⁸⁸

Uriah Smith encourages church members to let their “mind be filled with reverence and godly fear” by reflecting on God’s purity, holiness, and justice contrasting it with our lack thereof.¹⁸⁹ In another article, Smith also argues that “our words should

¹⁸³ Paul Omar Campbell, “Public Prayer,” *Ministry*, 1957, 24.

¹⁸⁴ Robert S. Joyce, “Our Conduct in the Pulpit,” *Ministry* 1939 April, n.d.

¹⁸⁵ O. B. Kuhn, “The Pastoral Prayer,” *Ministry*, December 1967, 34.

¹⁸⁶ Carlyle B. Haynes, “Long Public Prayers Out of Place,” *Ministry*, April 1936, 2.

¹⁸⁷ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Prayer: A Theological Reflection,” *Ministry*, December 2006, 5-7.

¹⁸⁸ Paul Omar Campbell, “Public Prayer,” *Ministry* July 1957, 22-25.

¹⁸⁹ Uriah Smith, *Advent Review & Sabbath Herald*, April 16, 1857.

ever be reverent toward God,” avoiding the superabundant mechanical repetition of expressions such as “Good Lord” or “O Lord!” in our prayers. While cautioning against an artificial or sanctimonious manner, he urges “we always ought to hallow his name.”¹⁹⁰ For James White, we are to come “boldly before the throne of grace . . . but this does not mean that we are to come without deep reverence and humility.”¹⁹¹ Irreverence has no place in prayer, especially in corporate worship.¹⁹²

4.2.3.5.4 Communal

Congregational prayer is the covenant community engaging with God. It is by nature communal, not individualistic. Although offered to God, it also bears in mind the other worshippers in attendance. Accordingly, worship leaders should not be so absorbed by God that they ignore the rest of the congregation. Ellen G. White urges ministers “not to preach a long sermon to the Lord in your long prayers.”¹⁹³ She believes that public prayers should be “short and to the point” and that “long, prosy talks and prayers are out of place,” going as far as saying that “[t]hey weary the angels as well as the people who listen to them.”¹⁹⁴ The necessary brevity of public prayer is addressed in the *Church Manual*.¹⁹⁵ It quotes Ellen White who earlier wrote: “One or two minutes is long enough

¹⁹⁰ Uriah Smith, *Adventist Review & Sabbath Herald*, May 14, 1861.

¹⁹¹ James White, “Come to Jesus in the Boldness of Prayer,” *Review & Herald*, July 15, 1862, 54.

¹⁹² C. M. Mellor, “The Content of the Pastoral Prayer (Concluded),” *Ministry* April 1970, 21.

¹⁹³ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:201.

¹⁹⁴ Ellen White, *Review & Herald*, October 10, 1882.

¹⁹⁵ *Church Manual*, 2015, 181.

for any ordinary prayer.”¹⁹⁶ Because of the communal nature of public prayer, worship leaders are also advised to use the correct pronoun (“we”, “our” and “us” instead of “I” or “they”) in addressing God on behalf of the congregation. This indicates that the pastoral prayer is public and communal instead of private or individual in nature.¹⁹⁷ Even though pastoral prayer should be “couched in dignified language,” it should not be archaic or pedantic.¹⁹⁸ Also, although addressed to God, the prayer should be heard clearly, so that the congregation can meaningfully participate in it.¹⁹⁹ The communal dimension of pastoral prayer highlights the vertical and horizontal aspects of Adventist worship.

4.2.4 Offerings

As a response of gratitude and affection, Adventists respond to God’s Word not only in song and prayer but also in gifts. As such, Adventist worship is expressed not only through speaking, singing and praying but through tangible giving as well.

The offering was not always a regular element of Adventist worship services.²⁰⁰ Early Adventists met to sing, to pray, to testify and to exhort each other but stopped short of expressing their love for God through giving. As a result, Adventist ministers worked under serious financial hardship as they labored in their itinerant preaching ministries.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ *Church Manual*, 2015, 181.

¹⁹⁷ Taylor G. Bunch, “Prayer in the Public Service,” *Ministry*, October 1946.

¹⁹⁸ Rex D. Edwards, “The Pastoral Prayer in Worship,” *Ministry*, 1988, 17.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ For an historical background to offerings in Adventist worship, see Bert B. Holoviak and F. Donald Yost, *A Report on the Use of Tithe in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Office of Archives and Statistics (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists September, 1976).

²⁰¹ In April 1848, James White confided to his friends, the Hastings that “All we have including clothes, bedding, and household furniture we have with us in a three-foot trunk, and that is but half full. We have nothing else to do but to serve God and go where God opens the way for us (James White, letter to

In 1859, a plan called “systematic benevolence” was recommended to encourage weekly giving.²⁰² In 1876, after extensive Bible studies, Adventists officially adopted the tithe system through which members were “to devote one-tenth of all their income from whatever source, to the cause of God.”²⁰³ By returning one tenth of their income, Adventists provided a better financial basis to support the gospel ministry and mission. In 1878, a 76-page booklet entitled *Systematic Benevolence* was issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to give practical guidance in the area of giving through tithes and offerings based on Old and New Testament principles.²⁰⁴ It included themes such as liberality, stewardship and trust in God, which continue to inform the practice of giving in Adventist churches.²⁰⁵

As a basic part of worship, the offering time is normally preceded by a brief and pointed appeal on the importance of giving, based on *A Tithe and Offerings Readings booklet*, published annually by the General Conference.²⁰⁶ These readings emphasize the spiritual motivation for giving while also highlighting the need for providing financial support for the church. Regrettably, in some instances, these appeals are sometimes turned into sermonettes that last well over five minutes.

Brother and Sister Hastings, April 1848, written from Middletown, Connecticut). See also, James White, General Conference, “Report of General Conference held at Battle Creek, Michigan, June 3-6, 1859,” 13-14.

²⁰² *Review and Herald*, February 3, 1859, 13.

²⁰³ *General Conference Bulletin*, Fifth Session, March 31, 1876.

²⁰⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Systematic Benevolence or the Bible Plan for Supporting the Ministry* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1878).

²⁰⁵ For instance, compare outline of *Systematic Benevolence* with *Sabbath School Lesson, July-October 1889* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, February 19, 1889) and *Sabbath School Lesson, January-March 2018: Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016.

²⁰⁶ Can be accessed on the denominational website at: <https://stewardship.adventist.org/tithe-and-offerings-readings>, accessed February 20, 2018.

Depending on local church practice, prayer is offered either before or after the collection. The worship leader thanks God for the gifts received and beseeches His blessings over their use in service and mission.

What do Adventists express through their gifts? Their statement of belief teaches that as God's stewards, "we acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His Gospel and the support and growth of His church."²⁰⁷ Tithing, as the minimum baseline for giving, is expressed in the *Church Manual*: "In recognition of the biblical plan and the solemn privilege and responsibility . . . all are encouraged to faithfully return a tithe, one tenth of their increase or personal income, into the denomination's treasury."²⁰⁸ *Adventist Minister's Handbook* clearly points out that "through the tithe and offerings the congregation acknowledges God's blessings during the week that He is Lord, and all we have belongs to Him. These gifts indicate that our love for Him flows freely from a grateful heart."²⁰⁹ Succinctly put, through the act of giving, worshippers respond with gratefulness and love to the God who blesses them.

Based on this understanding, we now look briefly at the incentive, purpose and theology behind the act of giving in worship.

²⁰⁷ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 301.

²⁰⁸ *Church Manual*, 2015, 136.

²⁰⁹ *Minister's Handbook*, 126.

4.2.4.1 Incentive.

What motivates Adventist worshippers to give during corporate worship? What is it about their relationship with God that makes them bring their monetary gifts to Him every week?

First, by giving, Adventists acknowledge God as the source of their being and the source of the money they give.²¹⁰ By worshipping God with their money, they confess that God is the Creator and Owner of everything that exists.²¹¹ By returning tithes and offerings, Adventist worshippers recognise that “God is proprietor in the absolute sense.”²¹² In doing so, they also recognise the bestowal of His grace upon their hearts.²¹³

Although the Adventist Church encourages members to give money during the worship service, their *Minister’s Handbook* teaches the following: “Rather than a fund-raising event, the offering provides a tangible opportunity for the congregation to express praise to God by returning to Him a tithe of His blessings and offerings of appreciation for His sustaining grace.”²¹⁴ Hence, Christian giving is not merely a response to the financial needs of the church but an expression of worship to the Creator for His providential care. The offering of our money “is a response of the entire congregation to God’s goodness.”²¹⁵ Through their gifts, Adventists recognise that whatever they earn or

²¹⁰ *Systematic Benevolence*, 4-5.

²¹¹ *Tithing Principles and Guidelines* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of SDA, 1990), 6-7.

²¹² Charles E. Bradford, “Stewardship,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 655.

²¹³ *Church Manual*, 2015, 136.

²¹⁴ *Minister’s Handbook*, 126.

²¹⁵ S. Joseph Kidder, *Majesty: Experiencing Authentic Worship* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2009), 97.

own is a result of God's grace. As such, their gifts concretely express their belief in the sovereignty of God over their lives.²¹⁶

Second, by giving, Adventists recognise God as the Giver and Forgiver.

According to Adventist theologian, Àngel Rodríguez, "God and Christ are described in the New Testament as the Great Givers who enrich humans out of their loving grace."²¹⁷

God, is the Author of every good and perfect gift . . . who gives to all men generously and without reproaching" (James 1:17, 5). He is our model of giving.²¹⁸ When God gives, He gives generously. To declare God as a Giver is to consider His Supreme Gift, Jesus Christ who in turn challenges his followers to give freely because they received freely (Matt. 10:8).

God is also the Forgiver. In Christ, God provides humanity with its only source of forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ the Giver and the Forgiver compels faith and gratitude in His people. "People give as they are motivated by the grace of God and the gift of salvation."²¹⁹ This means that giving cannot be seen as a way of manipulating God through which we can exchange money for God's blessings. The act of giving, like any other part of Adventist worship, is prompted by God's own self-giving. The offering time simply expresses the covenant relationship that exists between God and His people.²²⁰ The offerings are the visible expression of their faith and commitment to God.

²¹⁶ *Fundamental Beliefs*, 300-301.

²¹⁷ Àngel M. Rodríguez, *Stewardship Roots* (Silver Spring, MA: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Stewardship Ministries Department, 2013), 81.

²¹⁸ Charles E. Bradford, "Stewardship," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 658.

²¹⁹ *Minister's Handbook*, 145.

²²⁰ Àngel M. Rodríguez, ed., "Elements of Adventist Worship: Their Theological Significance" in *Worship, Ministry, Authority of the Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2016), 141.

Third, giving is a response to God's blessings.²²¹ Giving is an effective witness that God is the Source of all blessings. The tithe and the offerings are given during the church service as an authoritative affirmation that God has been continually blessing His people. Therefore, the act of giving is a form of recognition, a symbol of gratitude for divine providence. "Offerings are the physical embodiment or concretization of our gratitude to the Lord."²²²

4.2.4.2 Purpose.

To what end do worshippers give during the worship service? What are the reasons behind the act of giving? It can be noted that worshippers give because of the following reasons: (1) It is an act of worship; (2) It assists the mission of the church; (3) it is good stewardship.

First, God's "people give as an act of worship."²²³ Giving is a tangible expression of love and commitment to God, a response to God's generosity whether it is through tithe and offerings, or some other means, giving is the heart's joyful response to the goodness of God.²²⁴ It is the ritual returning of a portion of what God has initially given.

²²¹ S. Joseph Kidder, *Majesty: Experiencing Authentic Worship* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009), 99.

²²² Àngel M. Rodríguez, "Elements of Adventist Worship" in *Worship, Ministry and the Authority of the Church*, 141.

²²³ *Minister's Handbook*, 145.

²²⁴ Ellen White expresses it this way: "And what more appropriate time could be chosen for setting aside the tithe and presenting our offerings to God? On the Sabbath we have thought upon His goodness. We have beheld His work in creation as an evidence of His power in redemption. Our hearts are filled with thankfulness for His great love. And now, before the toil of a week begins, we return to Him His own, and with it an offering to testify our gratitude. Thus, our practice will be a weekly sermon, declaring that God is the possessor of all our property, and that He has made us stewards to use it to His glory. Every acknowledgment of our obligation to God will strengthen the sense of obligation. Gratitude deepens as we give it expression, and the joy it brings is life to soul and body." Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, February 4, 1902.

Second, God's people give "to support the work of God,"²²⁵ especially "to sustain the gospel laborers in their work."²²⁶ Adventists share the view that "God has made the proclamation of the gospel dependent upon the labors and the gifts of His people."²²⁷ Each time the members give, they do so with the firm belief that they are concretely supporting the proclamation of the Gospel and advancing of the church's mission to the world. However, in Adventist thinking, giving is not to the church but to God. This implies that Church leaders are accountable to God and to Christ's body on how they use God's money.²²⁸

Third, Adventists give during corporate worship because they believe in Christian stewardship.²²⁹ They understand that God made the world for the enjoyment and care of people whom He created and redeemed. They acknowledge that, as God's stewards, they are responsible to God for the use of the varied grace with which He has entrusted them. Recognizing God's full ownership of their lives, they dedicate all they have to Him through the proper utilization of all of His gifts and resources.²³⁰

Adventists gratefully practice the act of giving as an act of dedication and worship. In giving, they affirm that all of life is to be lived under the lordship of Christ. Such giving is an expression of their full commitment to God "based on faith and trust in

²²⁵ *Church Manual*, 2015, 135.

²²⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:249.

²²⁷ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 74.

²²⁸ *Church Manual*, 2015, 141.

²²⁹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 301-310; Charles E. Bradford, "Stewardship" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 651-674; *Church Manual*, 2015, 135-137.

²³⁰ *Church Manual*, 2015, 105.

Him, a decision of the heart and not a formality.”²³¹ Hence, giving is a weekly repositioning of life and possessions to the lordship of Christ.

Adventists recognise the tithe as “‘holy to the Lord’ symbolising God’s ownership of everything (Lev. 27: 30, 32). It is returned to Him as His own.”²³² They see their offerings as an opportunity to express gratitude and love for having God prospering them.²³³ The returning of tithes and giving of offerings are not an afterthought within the context of Adventist worship. Worshipers often prepare their offerings at home and bring them in especially dedicated envelopes.

According to the *Elder’s Handbook*, “[g]uilt and embarrassment must never be employed in this sacred act of commitment.”²³⁴ God is not so much concerned about the amount of money offered. Rather, He is more interested in the motives of the heart. Ellen White notes: “Entire devotion and benevolence, prompted by grateful love, will impart to the smallest offering, the willing sacrifice, a divine fragrance, making the gift of priceless value.”²³⁵

4.2.4.3 Theology.

Explicit acknowledgement of God’s love and care permeates the act of giving. A fundamental assumption of that liturgical action is that God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of His people, deserves total worship. The basic reason for the offering, apart

²³¹ Àngel M. Rodríguez, *Stewardship Roots*, 85.

²³² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 304.

²³³ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 306.

²³⁴ *Elder’s Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 53.

²³⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 3:397.

from the routine funding of the church's personnel, activities and mission, is to respond to God's generosity in His creation, redemption and providence.

Faithfulness in giving reflects the nature of our Heavenly Father. God is faithful in providing for His people and He manifested this supremely by fulfilling His promise in sending the Messiah. His faithfulness covers the entire realm of Christian life. By giving, the church acknowledges that God is a faithful Provider for it is His nature to give.²³⁶ He is committed to blessing His people.

"Jesus is Lord" is a statement at the heart of Christian worship. Indeed, the act of giving flows from this central affirmation. Both creation and new creation in Christ are God's gift. Christ offered Himself as a Sacrifice and invites His redeemed to offer themselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1, 2). His claim of God's reign now is liturgically expressed in the offering where the church recognises the vital connection that exists between its profession of faith and its concrete actions.

This crucial role of Jesus Christ's in our act of giving is highlighted by Ellen White:

All blessings must come through a Mediator. Now every member of the human family is given wholly into the hands of Christ, and whatever we possess—whether it is the gift of money, of houses, of lands, of reasoning powers, of physical strength, of intellectual talents—in this present life, and the blessings of the future life, are placed in our possession as God's treasures to be faithfully expended for the benefit of man. Every gift is stamped with the cross and bears the image and superscription of Jesus Christ. All things come of God. From the smallest benefits up to the largest blessing, all flow through the one Channel—a superhuman mediation sprinkled with the blood that is of value beyond estimate because it was the life of God in His Son.²³⁷

Within this perspective, God is involved from beginning to end. The offering is not a one-sided movement from the church to God. Rather, God always moves first

²³⁶ Kidder, *Majesty*, 102.

²³⁷ Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1979), 22.

before the church responds in worship through giving. Giving is a stewardship of divine grace. “If the stewardship motif says anything, it is that we are held accountable as individuals for doing the best we can with what we have, to give glory to God and to the service of fellow humans and all of creation.”²³⁸

Implicit in returning the tithe and giving the offerings during the worship service is that God actually receives those gifts. Yet it is the church that uses the gifts to advance God’s Kingdom. If it is God who receives and the church that uses the offerings, then there is an intimate connection between divine and human action in God’s salvific purpose for humanity. The church is the instrument for the extension of God’s kingdom on earth. The faithful and generous giving of tithe and offerings facilitate the proclamation and actualization of the kingdom of God set against the horizon of Christ’s ultimate and eschatological victory.

4.2.5 Ordinances

In addition to the acts of weekly congregational worship we have examined so far, Adventist worship also includes the ordinances of baptism, foot washing and the Lord’s Supper. Even though these rites do not form part of the regular worship service, Adventists consider them as vitally important to the life of the church.

Firmly grounded in NT practice and teaching, these observances find their meaning in the fact that Christ instituted and participated in them while on earth. These ordinances highlight divine grace and availability, particularly manifested in the person of Christ.

²³⁸ Charles E. Bradford, “Stewardship,” 661.

4.2.5.1 Baptism.

In the *Review and Herald* of February 24, 1859, F. B. Frisbie, reported a quite unusual baptism that took place in Wright, Michigan:

Second-day we met at 11 o'clock A. M., and gave a discourse on baptism, and then went to the Rio Grande and cut the ice in a beautiful place and buried eight souls in baptism. The Spirit of the Lord rested down upon us and owned the ordinance, while some came out of the water shouting and praising God.²³⁹

Despite its extreme nature, this baptism illustrates a number of important elements already present in early Adventist baptisms: (i) preaching preceding baptism;²⁴⁰ (ii) baptism by immersion;²⁴¹ (iii) baptism associated to the work of the Holy Spirit;²⁴² (iv) rejoicing accompanying baptism.²⁴³ Concerning the authorization to baptise, the 1932 *Church Manual* states: “In the absence of an ordained pastor, it is always customary, whenever possible, for the elder to arrange with the president of the conference or the superintendent of the mission field for the administration of the rite of baptism to those desiring to unite with his church.”²⁴⁴ Adventists hold to the same practice today.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ J. B. Frisbie, “Meetings in Wright, Mich.,” *Review & Herald*, February, 24, 1859, 112

²⁴⁰ *Review & Herald*, May 19, 1851; *Review & Herald*, May 29, 1855

²⁴¹ *Review & Herald*, September 1850; *Review & Herald*, November 22, 1854; *Review & Herald*, January 24, 1854; *Review & Herald*, June 28, 1855; *Review & Herald*, March 13, 1856, 187; *Review & Herald*, May 16, 1854; *Review & Herald* April 2, 1857.

²⁴² *Review & Herald*, July 4, 1854; *Review & Herald* March 13, 1856, 187.

²⁴³ For instance, *Review & Herald*, November 1, 1853 mentions: “It was easy singing, praying and shouting. Glory to God! How refreshing to the spirit to look back upon such sacred seasons” whereas *Review & Herald*, October 24, 1854 mentions: “four willing and happy souls were baptized,” *Review & Herald*, July 3, 1856: “those baptized went on their way rejoicing.”

²⁴⁴ *Church Manual*, 1932, 27.

²⁴⁵ *Church Manual*, 2015, 75.

The significance and importance of baptism is clearly expressed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook*.²⁴⁶ The *Minister's Handbook* outlines three steps in which the church is at work as it participates in the liturgy. We may summarize these as follows: before, during, and following baptism.

4.2.5.1.1 Before Baptism

“Baptism entails an individual choice.”²⁴⁷ When Adventists talk about baptism, they are referring to believers’ baptism, i.e. of those who are capable of making a personal profession of faith expressed through the baptismal vows.²⁴⁸ Millerism recruited heavily from Baptists and restorationist Christians who practiced baptism by immersion. From their earliest days, Seventh-day Adventists believed that baptism is vitally linked to the believer’s experience with Christ, expressing his or her repentance and conversion. Ellen White asserts, “Repentance, faith, and baptism are the requisite steps in conversion.”²⁴⁹ Through baptism, believers testify publicly of their personal faith in Christ as Lord and of their commitment to follow Him as faithful disciples. While baptism is a personal experience between the baptised individual and God, it is not an individualized experience; the act of baptism involves the church by incorporating the baptised person into fellowship.

²⁴⁶ *Review & Herald*, October 24, 1854.

²⁴⁷ *Minister's Handbook*, 163.

²⁴⁸ Baptismal vow is an early practice in Adventism. For instance, in 1876, James White wrote, "Those parents who brought their children to the (Camp) meeting and saw them converted, and take the baptismal vow, are now glad that they brought them." *Sign of the Times*, June 8, 1876.

²⁴⁹ Ellen G. White, *Letter 174*, 1909.

Preparation is primordial. The baptismal candidate is usually prepared through an extended series of Bible studies to review all the major elements of the Christian faith and life.²⁵⁰ On the day of baptism, care and support is provided through the provision of baptismal robes, towels and facilities for changing and procedures of baptism are rehearsed with the pastor to allay the baptismal candidates' fears or concerns.²⁵¹

Since, baptism is understood as a public display of faith and a mark of repentance, baptismal candidates are examined in the presence of the congregation, to determine their readiness for baptism. The examination of candidates entails the minister putting them through a set of doctrinal statements. The candidates indicate assent either by raising their hands or by responding "I believe."²⁵² As such, the act of openly confessing one's faith through baptismal questions and answers is integral to baptism itself. The church then votes the baptismal candidates into membership, subject to baptism, by the raising of hands,

4.2.5.1.2 During Baptism

Baptism involves the community. As the candidate enters the baptistery, the officiating pastor frequently invites family and friends who have been instrumental in the baptismal candidates' life to stand in honour of the occasion. A few words are said about the candidate's spiritual walk just before immersion into the baptismal waters,²⁵³ following a brief statement such as: "Because of your profession of faith in Christ as your

²⁵⁰ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 211.

²⁵¹ *Minister's Handbook*, 164-165.

²⁵² *Church Manual*, 2015, 44-45.

²⁵³ "On Baptism," *Review & Herald*, April 2, 1908.

Savior, and your desire to live a new life in Him, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”²⁵⁴ Plunging the believer into the baptismal water “is a dramatic liturgical symbol of death and burial”²⁵⁵ as well as resurrection to a new life. “What is at issue is the relationship between the symbolic action in baptism, and belief.”²⁵⁶ Despite some early Adventists’ anti-Trinitarian leanings,²⁵⁷ Seventh-day Adventist baptisms were regularly conducted in the name of the three persons of the Godhead (reflecting Christ’s command in Matthew 28).²⁵⁸ Baptism by immersion in the name of the triune God leads believers into the Trinitarian and ecclesial communion.

4.2.5.1.3 *Following Baptism*

After baptism, the officiating pastor can make a Gospel appeal and invite those who would like to join in the next baptismal ceremony. The baptismal ceremony is closed with a prayer from the baptistery.

A Baptismal Certificate together with suitable gifts are normally presented during the worship service. After the worship service, a special celebration ceremony may be held to welcome the newly baptised member into church fellowship, stressing the communal dimension of baptism. The privileges and responsibilities of church membership are highlighted. The community of faith, especially through seasoned church members, gives its Christian encouragement and affirmation while elders are assigned the

²⁵⁴ *Minister’s Handbook*, 166.

²⁵⁵ Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 63.

²⁵⁶ Raymond Holmes, *op.cit.*

²⁵⁷ Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 1: Historical Overview,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 41(1): 113-129; Merlin D. Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17/1 (Spring 2006), 125–139.

²⁵⁸ *Review & Herald*, July 1889, *Review & Herald*, April 10, 1894, 232; *Review & Herald*, December 3, 1895.

task of being spiritual mentors to the new church member. Implicit in this practice is an affirmation that the believer may participate in the life of the church and the church will participate in the life of the believer as a loving and caring community of faith.

4.2.5.1.4 *Meaning and Significance*

Baptism brings into focus many theological and soteriological themes, such as the doctrines of God, Church and salvation. Here is the official position of Seventh-day Adventists on baptism:

By baptism, we confess our faith in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and testify our death to sin and our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus, we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings. (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20.)²⁵⁹

The text is quite explicit about the symbolic nature of baptism. Baptism should not be separated from conversion. Since the believer who is baptised has already experienced the miracle of the new birth through saving faith in Christ, it is clear that Adventists do not regard baptism as effecting salvation or regeneration.²⁶⁰ Adventists do not see baptism as a sacrament through which grace flows into the believer's life in and out of itself.²⁶¹ Baptism in itself does not guarantee newness of life.²⁶² As early as 1854, James White

²⁵⁹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 211.

²⁶⁰ Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed., Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 591.

²⁶¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996), 10:166.

²⁶² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 218-219.

was adamant that there is no sacramental power in the water as such.²⁶³ An Adventist doctrinal statement in 1872 states:

That Baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church, to follow faith and repentance, an ordinance by which we commemorate the resurrection of Christ, as by this act we show our faith in his burial and resurrection, and through that, of the resurrection of all the saints at the last day; and that no other mode fitly represents these facts than that which the Scriptures prescribe, namely, immersion. Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12.²⁶⁴

Adventists view baptism as a public testimony to an inner spiritual transformation. They view it as symbolic of cleansing from sin and moral defilement.²⁶⁵ Belief as well as submission to divine transformation is required prior to baptism. Baptismal regeneration is ruled out. Public baptism proclaims the new birth but does not cause it.

i. Symbol of Communion with Christ

Baptism is God's gift to us in Christ and our response to Him in Christ. Although administered in the name of the triune God, it remains a Christ-centred event. Admittedly, the reality of being baptised into Christ involves entering spiritually into "the passion experience of our Lord."²⁶⁶ It takes up the history of the passion and locates the believer within it. Baptism means participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus on a spiritual level.²⁶⁷ This is brought out in Paul's reference to baptism in Romans 6 and Colossians 2 where the symbolic dimensions of death, burial and resurrection are highlighted.

²⁶³ *Review & Herald*, October 24, 1854, 84.

²⁶⁴ *A Declaration of The Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872).

²⁶⁵ Herbert Keisler, "The Ordinances" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 588.

²⁶⁶ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 215.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

Baptism identifies the baptised with the dying and the rising of Christ. Through identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection in baptism, three great realities are memorialized and celebrated. First, when the baptised identify with Christ in His death, they declare their helplessness and lostness outside of Christ, and demonstrate publicly their faith in Christ and death to sin. As such, “[b]aptism symbolizes the crucifixion of the old life.”²⁶⁸ Second, when the baptised identifies with Christ in His burial, he or she declares not only a death to sin but also a renouncement of the world and the service of Satan.²⁶⁹ Ellen White puts it this way:

Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.²⁷⁰

Third, the most unique aspect of baptism results from the believers’ identity with Christ in his resurrection. The rising out of the water symbolizes the believers’ new life in Christ. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is now operative as they walk in newness of life in Him. This involves a new order of existence, a reorientation of the mind and a dedication of the life to Christ. The struggle against sin continues but can now be fought by the power of the Spirit.

ii. *Symbol of Entrance into the Church*

The practice of baptism is an integral part of God’s plan to bring believers into salvific communion with Him, and to gather them into his kingdom as sons and daughters. Commenting on Church Order in 1854, J. B. Friesbie made it clear that

²⁶⁸ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe.*, 215.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

²⁷⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:91.

“[w]hen we become obedient believers and have put on Christ by baptism, then the Lord will add us to his church and make us members of his body.”²⁷¹

It is through baptism that the Lord adds new disciples to the church (Acts 2:41, 7; 1 Corinthians 12:13). For Adventists, “[o]ne cannot be baptized and not join the church family.”²⁷² Baptism, in making us one with Christ, makes us one with the church since “it involves membership in the body of Christ.”²⁷³ It incorporates the baptised person into the fellowship of the people of God.

Baptism is a public declaration that the offer of the Gospel, embedded in the gift of Christ, has been accepted. The baptismal rite is conducted in and by the church because the church is a baptised and baptismal community. As such, the Christian initiation of baptism is administered in the presence of the entire congregation. It normally follows a sermon, expressing the idea that baptism like other elements in worship, is viewed as the response of faith to the proclamation of the Gospel of reconciliation.

Baptism is a liturgical act that incorporates believers into the body of Christ. Ellen G. White presents it this way: “Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride; He is the head, and the church is the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church.”²⁷⁴ By being united to Christ, the head of the body, the Christian is automatically connected to the other members of the body through baptism and the bond of the Holy Spirit.

²⁷¹ F. B. Friesbie, “Church Order,” *Review & Herald*, December 26, 1854, 147.

²⁷² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 218.

²⁷³ Herbert Kiesler, “The Ordinances” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 586.

²⁷⁴ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 318.

For Adventists, baptism is a sign of entrance into the Kingdom. Ellen White puts it this way:

Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God's spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, "The Lord our righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6.²⁷⁵

Again, she writes:

Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan, and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. They have obeyed the command, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing." And to them is fulfilled the promise, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.²⁷⁶

Through baptism, the baptised Christian commits himself to be a disciple of Christ. Since baptism is the means of initiation into the church, Adventists only baptise those who show signs of regeneration and make a public declaration of faith.²⁷⁷ Baptism is for believers and is understood as an outward sign of an inward experience. Although inward, it is not an individual experience since the church provides the context for hearing the Gospel and is the body that incorporates the new believer into its fellowship. Within this understanding of baptism, the church comprises those who have responded

²⁷⁵ Ellen White, *op.cit.*, 307.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 220-221.

wholeheartedly to the Gospel.²⁷⁸ Baptism signals that one has become God's new creation and has embraced a new order.

iii. *Symbol of a Covenant Relationship*

This distinctive understanding of baptism rests upon the supposition that the church is a covenant community which exists to do the will of Christ.²⁷⁹ Baptism refers to the divine action that initiates and establishes the covenant with an individual and the human response in accepting that covenant. Both divine initiative and personal faith commitment are parts of this process.²⁸⁰

As a sign of the believer's commitment to the divine covenant, baptism has ethical implications. Through baptism, Christians declare that they have heard God's call to holy living.²⁸¹ Every baptism is a reminder to the community of faith that it has declared its loyalty to God. The baptismal ceremony celebrates the covenant by which God has bound Himself to His people through the blood of Christ.

Bound in this covenant of grace, the church confesses Jesus as Lord. It pledges itself not only to be pure and holy in life but also to be an agent of reconciliation to the world, bearing witness to the power of the Gospel to transform lives. Baptism, and, by

²⁷⁸ Raoul Dederen, ed., "The Church" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Commentary Reference Series* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 556.

²⁷⁹ Norman R. Gulley, "Ordinances of the Church: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper," in Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ed., *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church Studies, Adventist Ecclesiology 3* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2016), 187-188.

²⁸⁰ Norman G. Gulley, "Ordinances of the Church...", 187.

²⁸¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 217.

extension, worship, is not tied to the four walls of a building but permeates the whole of life (see Romans 12:1-2).

4.2.5.2 The Communion Service.²⁸²

Adventists consider foot-washing and the Lord's Supper as integral parts of the Communion Service.²⁸³ This is how they have viewed it from their beginnings. For instance, one of the earliest detailed reports on foot-washing is a *Review and Herald* article written by B. B. Brigham in 1852 in which he describes a Communion Service held in Jackson, Michigan, as follows:

In the evening we repaired again to the house of worship, where we had the Lord's supper, and all the ordinances of the church of God. And though quite a number had to start for home, yet forty-five joyful brethren and sisters remained, and sat together in a heavenly place, while God's Spirit was poured upon us, and his banner over us was love. It seemed to me that I never before had such a glorious time. For many a dreary month previous, I had concluded that the sweet communications of the Spirit were not to be enjoyed in this mortal state. But let me say to any such desponding souls, that peace, love and joy inexpressible, yes, and a hope too, as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, can be obtained while in this tabernacle, by keeping the commandments of God, the faith of Jesus, and all the ordinances of the Lord's house.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Adventists do not normally use the term 'Eucharist' to refer to the Communion Service. However, they use the terms 'Communion' and 'Lord's Supper' interchangeably. For instance, their Fundamental Statement of Belief uses the term 'Lord's Supper' (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p.225) while their *Church Manual*, p.123 and their *Minister's Handbook*, p.168 prefer the term 'Communion Service'. In this section, I will use the term 'Communion Service' when referring to the combined practice of foot-washing and the Lord's Supper, which are inseparable whenever practiced in Adventist worship.

²⁸³ For an historical overview of the Lord's Supper among Seventh-day Adventists, see Michael W. Campbell, "'A Holy Spell': The Development of the Communion Service among Seventh-day Adventists," Term Paper, Andrews University, 2004. Accessed at The Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University.

²⁸⁴ *Review & Herald*, September 2, 1852, 72.

Such an experience was not unusual for early Adventists, who saw great special spiritual benefits in the Communion Service.²⁸⁵ “Through this service, “salvation became more real to them.”²⁸⁶

How did early Adventists practice Communion? John F. Loughborough, in a statement written in 1916, gives the following outline:

1. Hymn;
2. Prayer for the Lord's blessing upon the service;
3. Hymn;
4. Exhortation regarding the importance of the meeting;
5. Roll call of members;
6. Read John 13:2-17 to introduce the foot-washing service;
7. Separate (according to gender), and attend the ordinance of foot-washing;
8. Come together again for Communion Service while singing another Hymn;
9. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; 10: 16; and exhort on partaking of the emblems;
10. After the blessing and breaking of the bread and passing it to the communicants, all eat at the same time after the minister pronounces, “Jesus said, ‘This is my body, which is broken for you.’”
11. In like manner, when the wine in the cups has been passed, all drink together after the minister says, Jesus said, ‘This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.’”
12. After gathering up the cups, meeting is close by singing a hymn;
13. What remains of the consecrated bread and the wine after the service is later mingled by the deacons and burned discreetly.

Communion services nowadays typically follow the same pattern, except that there are no longer roll calls of members. These days, the unused wine is respectfully poured out on the ground rather than mixed to the bread before burning.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Ellen G. White, diary, January 1, 1859, *Selected Messages*, vol. 5, 1859; March 19, 1859, *Manuscript 2*, 1859; H. C. Winslow, “From Bro. Winslow,” *Review & Herald*, December 11, 1866, 10; Joseph Bates, “Labors in Michigan,” *Review & Herald*, December 1, 1863; S.B Whitney, “From Bro. Whitney,” *Review & Herald*, August 15, 1865, 87; A. S. Hutchins, “Report from Bro. Hutchins,” *Review & Herald*, 20, 1864, 132; Mary F. Maxson, “From Sis. Maxson,” *Review & Herald*, February 16, 1864, 95; Mary F. Maxson, “The Fast,” *Review & Herald*, September 20, 1864, 133-134;

²⁸⁶ Michael W. Campbell, “A Holy Spell”, 41.

²⁸⁷ *Church Manual*, 2015, 123-127; 183-3; *Minister's Handbook*, 168-172.

It seems that by the 1930s, the Communion Service was not valued as before. The 1932 *Church Manual* mentions the “decidedly wrong” practice of some members to stay away from the service.”²⁸⁸ This seems to be the case even now.²⁸⁹

How do Adventists understand the Communion Service? Their current Statement of Belief reads as follows:

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Savior. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians.²⁹⁰

We now look at both rites separately, looking briefly at the development of their practices before addressing their theological interpretations.

4.2.5.2.1 *Foot-washing*

Foot-washing was an extremely important liturgical practice for Adventists right from the beginning.²⁹¹ The first instance of foot-washing among Adventists took place *after* the Lord's Supper at the close of a meeting in Vermont in 1844.²⁹² A July 1845

²⁸⁸ *Church Manual*, 1932, 159.

²⁸⁹ James A. Ditties, Communion and Community, *Adventist Review*, 2003, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://archives.adventistreview.org/2003-1529/story1.html>.

²⁹⁰ *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 226.

²⁹¹ Raoul Dederen, ed. “The Church” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 558; Ron Graybill, “Foot Washing in Early Adventism.” *Review and Herald*, May 22, 1975.

²⁹² For an historical overview of foot washing in Adventism, see Roger H. Ferris, “The Ordinance of Foot Washing and the Lord's Supper in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination.” Unpublished term paper, Andrews University, 1957; Harold E. Fagal. “An Investigation into the Ordinance of Foot Washing among Early Adventists from 1844 to 1867.” Unpublished term paper, Andrews University, 1964. For a detailed analysis from a biblical, historical and Adventist perspective, see *Cène et Ablution des Pieds*;

article in *The Day-Star*, a Millerite journal, written by J. B. Cook, among the most “influential Millerite leaders” and one of the first to adopt seventh-day Sabbatarianism,²⁹³ affirms not only the importance of the ordinances but also that a third ordinance was binding on believers.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper embody in the impressive action which they involve, the great doctrines of Christianity—the death and resurrection of Jesus. They call to mind His second coming and our resurrection. The Saviour's example and command, which are employed to enforce these ordinances, enjoins another ordinance or appointment, which embody the great Gospel doctrine of love and subjection one to another in the Lord. Now, as the practical duties of Christianity are no less essential than the doctrines . . . it would seem that the ordinance which bodies forth the doctrine of mutual affection and submission, is no less binding than others. If I, your LORD AND MASTER, have WASHED YOUR FEET, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.²⁹⁴

Subsequent articles debated the question of foot-washing. Advocates referred to foot-washing as “an example of showing our love to the brethren, by an act of humility”²⁹⁵ and stressed the importance of observing “all the commandments of Jesus, even to washing one another's feet.”²⁹⁶ Its detractors associated it with fanaticism.²⁹⁷ Foot-washing became a general practice for Adventists over time. For instance, the fourth

Comité de Recherche Biblique de la Conférence Générale des Adventistes du Septième Jour, Dammarie-lès-Lys: Vie et Santé, 1991.

²⁹³ George Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010), 111.

²⁹⁴ J. B. Cook, “To be Christians, we must do the works of Christ,” *Day-Star*, 6 (July 1, 1845): 31 (emphasis in original).

²⁹⁵ *Day-Star*, 8:11, October 25, 1845.

²⁹⁶ *Day-Star*, 7:8, October 18, 1845; see also, Joseph Bates, *The Seventh-Day Sabbath: A Perpetual Sign*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed., (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), 59.

²⁹⁷ *Advent Herald*, March 26, 1845, 56; *Advent Herald*, May 14, 1845, 107. See also, Graybill, Ron. “Foot Washing and Fanatics.” *Insight*. January, 1973, 9-13.

hymn in the first hymnal they published was a hymn about foot-washing.²⁹⁸ The first stanza illustrates the seriousness they attached to this practice:

*When Jesus Christ was here below,
He taught his people what to do:
And if we would his precepts keep,
We must attend to washing feet.
For on that night he was betray'd,
He for us all a pattern laid
Soon as his supper He did eat,
He rose and wash'd his brethren's feet.*

Adventists no longer have a hymn dedicated to foot-washing in their hymnal. Yet they still attach importance to this practice as do a number of Christian communities in the Free-Church tradition.²⁹⁹ They hold the firm conviction that they are following the example and obey the command of Christ in John 13:1-17 when they practice foot washing. Crucially, they insist that verses 14 and 15 (“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.”) must be interpreted literally. They believe that Christ’s promise attached to the practice of foot washing (John 13:17) is still valid.

²⁹⁸ James White, *Hymns for Gods Peculiar People that Keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus* (Oswego, NY: Richard Oliphant, 1849).

²⁹⁹ See for instance, John D. Roth *Practices: Mennonite Worship and Witness* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press), 2009, 114-115; Graydon F. Snyder and Dorren McFarlane: *The People Are Holy*, 79-81; Paul F. Bradshaw: *New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, 212.

Accordingly, and early in their history, Adventists have insisted that foot washing should be an “inseparable portion” of the Communion Service.³⁰⁰ It is practiced *preceding* and in conjunction with the Lord’s Supper. As such, it is considered as a preparatory service or an ordinance of humility.³⁰¹ Ellen G. White puts it this way:

This ordinance is Christ’s appointed preparation for the sacramental service. While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. Therefore, it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed.³⁰²

For Adventists, the ceremony of foot-washing is not an antiquated cultural practice but a sacred ordinance that “conveys a message of forgiveness, acceptance, assurance, and solidarity, primarily from Christ to the believer, but also between the believers themselves”³⁰³ In Adventist thinking, foot-washing has a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension.

(a) Vertical Dimension

In the Adventist understanding, foot-washing perfectly illustrates Christ’s condescension. They view it as a testimony of His humiliation to save humanity.³⁰⁴

Jesus, the King of glory, took the position of a servant in fulfillment of His vocation of humble service. “Foot-washing manifested His willingness to serve and was

³⁰⁰ *Review & Herald*, “Feet Washing,” February 24, 1859.

³⁰¹ *Church Manual*, 2015, 123-124; *Minister’s Handbook*, 170.

³⁰² Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 650.

³⁰³ *Church Manual*, 2015, 123-124.

³⁰⁴ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 650.

the preamble to His service on the cross.”³⁰⁵ In His life as in His death, Christ was an example of self-giving love. He came down, lived and died in service to God and humanity. He devoted Himself to His disciples in radical servanthood and “loved them to the end” by washing their feet in the Upper room [John 13:1] before pouring His blood on Calvary.

Consequently, foot-washing reminds Adventist believers they are followers of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53) who abandoned all the privileges of divinity and reduced Himself to the level of a servant in order to save us (Phil. 2:5-8). In practising foot washing, Adventists remember vividly Christ’s life of service.

(b) Horizontal Dimension

By washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus acted out His teaching of humility and service. Adventists, in imitation of Christ, perform the same rite as an “ordinance of humility.”³⁰⁶ Believers who wash each other’s feet demonstrate their willingness to serve each other in a humble spirit.

Normally, the ceremony takes place outside the main sanctuary. Men and women retire separately to different areas for foot-washing. In places where it is socially acceptable, separate areas can be organised for husband and wife, parents and baptised children to perform the rite of foot-washing.³⁰⁷ Deacons and deaconesses provide basins of water and towels for the service. The participants pair into two and wash each other’s feet. Customarily, after foot-washing, both participants offer a prayer for each other. After

³⁰⁵ Norman G. Gulley, “Ordinances of the Church: Baptism, Foot Washing, and the Lord’s Supper,” 189.

³⁰⁶ *Minister’s Handbook*, 170.

³⁰⁷ *Church Manual*, 2015, 182.

emptying the basin, they wash their hands and return to the sanctuary, meditating quietly or joining in the singing while waiting for the Lord's Supper.

This ceremony translates in practice liturgical and theological values into practice in ways that shape Adventism. First, Adventists link the rite of foot-washing to Christ's condescension. Ellen G. White considers foot-washing as "a memorial of His humiliation."³⁰⁸ Foot-washing memorializes His incarnation and life of service.³⁰⁹

Second, and closely related, foot-washing reminds the believers of their own baptism.³¹⁰ Though they have been baptised into Christ and are part of His body, they still need forgiveness because they are far from perfect. Foot-washing symbolizes the regular cleansing that is necessary in the life of the Christian.³¹¹

Third, participation in foot-washing is a sign of humility, forgiveness and acceptance between believers.³¹² It is a time when differences can be settled and enmities erased in preparation for taking the Lord's Supper. Many times, this can be a moving and liberating experience as pride and selfishness are set aside and estranged members reconcile. Foot-washing is about Christ's vision for the mending of all relationships, whether with God or one another. "Its intimacy serves as a reminder of the strong sense of community that binds members together."³¹³

³⁰⁸ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 650.

³⁰⁹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 227.

³¹⁰ Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed., Raoul Dederen, Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 603 (cf John 13:10).

³¹¹ Raoul Dederen, ed. "The Church" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 558.

³¹² *Church Manual*, 2015, 123-124.

³¹³ Malcolm Bull & Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 224.

Fourth, through foot-washing, church members liturgically express their love and obligations to one another.³¹⁴ In disclosing the fundamental dispositions embodied in this rite, foot-washing actualizes the deep Christian fellowship and solidarity that ought to exist and can exist among God's people. In washing each other's feet, the church is reminded of Christ's loving service that should characterize our relationships with each other as well.

In a nutshell, foot-washing embodies for Adventists what it means to be a Christian. This liturgical practice shapes them and translates the deep core of their theology into practice. By contemplating Christ's humility in action and by reenacting his loving service for the disciples through foot-washing, Adventists grasp and articulate the important fact that the Gospel needs to be lived in humble, loving service. Through this rite, they understand that communion with Christ implies communion with fellow Christians and that service to Christ involves practical service to fellow believers. Conversely, they also understand that unless the horizontal relationships within the church are secure, the vertical relationship with God is at risk. Through foot-washing, believers are invited to participate in spiritual transformation in order to be agents of reconciliation in the world. Authentically performed, foot-washing is an enacted parable, a tangible re-enactment of Christ's humiliation and life of service.³¹⁵ As a deeply transformative experience, foot-washing is a necessary preparation for the Lord's Supper.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song*, 91.

³¹⁵ Norman G. Gulley, "Ordinances of the Church" in *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church*, 191.

³¹⁶ *Church Manual*, 2015, 123-124 quoting Ellen G. White in *Desire of Ages*, 650; See also *Review and Herald*, November 4, 1902; Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 594.

4.2.5.2.2 *The Lord's Supper*

As indicated above, for Seventh-day Adventists, the Communion service comprises both foot-washing and the Lord's Supper. As in the case of foot-washing, the significance of the Lord's Supper to Adventists can be traced back to the early days of their movement. As early as 1848, while they were still forging their identity and doctrines, Adventists were already celebrating the Communion Service. This was due to the fact that most Adventists came from the Methodist, Baptist and the Christian Connexion traditions that regularly practiced this ordinance.

However, the Lord's Supper was not done without controversy since some believed that it should be done once a year, viewing it as a type of the Passover.³¹⁷ After agreeing not to entertain that novel idea, they integrated the Lord's Supper into what was called the "quarterly meeting," a practice borrowed from the Methodists. The Communion service was such a highpoint of those quarterly meetings that they became known as "ordinance meetings."³¹⁸

Adventists still attach great importance to the Lord's Supper. They celebrate this ordinance four times a year, following the pattern set by their pioneers. The service is led only by ordained ministers or in their absence by elected ordained elders. Only unfermented wine and unleavened bread are used to represent the spotless body and pure blood of Christ.³¹⁹ Whereas early Adventists seem to have used a common cup,³²⁰ later

³¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2:97.

³¹⁸ J. H. Waggoner, "In Ohio," *Review & Herald*, December 29, 1863, 38-39.

³¹⁹ Ellen White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2015), 1, 24; (cf. Ex.12:15, 19; 13:7; 1 Cor. 5:7,8; 1 Pet. 1:19)

³²⁰ Grace Amadon, "George W. Amadon," *Review & Herald*, July 6, 1944, 9-10.

generations used individual Communion cups, probably as a protection against communicable diseases.³²¹ Baptised Seventh-day Adventists and other believing Christians in attendance all coequally qualify to participate in the Lord's Supper at an Adventist Communion service. The rationale behind this is as follows: "[A] full commitment to Christ and faith in His sacrifice, not membership in any particular church" determines the adequacy for participation.³²²

In contrast, partaking the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner" brings about God's displeasure, hence the need for spiritual self-examination.³²³

I. Practice

Compared to Loughborough's earlier description, the Adventist *Church Manual* and *Minister's Handbook*³²⁴ offer more detail. Here is a typical order of service for the Lord's Supper as practiced by Adventists around the globe today:

1. Introit: Music played or hymn sung while the minister and elders move behind the Lord's Table and two deaconesses uncover the table;

2. The officiating minister uncovers the bread and reads an appropriate text such as 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24. The congregation remains seated with bowed heads while those officiating kneel. An elder offers a prayer of blessing for the bread. Rising from their knees, the ministers (and elders) symbolically break a portion of the bread, most of which has already been broken before the service;

³²¹ Ellen White, *Homeward Bound* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 172.

³²² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 234.

³²³ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 233 (cf. 1 Cor 11: 21, 27-29).

³²⁴ *Church Manual*, 2015, 182; *Minister's Handbook*, 171-172.

3. The deacons who are seated on the front pew, come forward to the table, take the trays of bread, and pass them down the pews while music is played and appropriate Bible passages are read. When the deacons return to the table after serving the bread, the minister and elders serve the deacons and one another. A text like 1 Corinthians 11:24 is read and the minister leads the congregation in eating the bread;

4. The leader then covers the bread and uncovers the wine, and reads a text like 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26. An elder offers a prayer of blessing for the wine, and the distribution process is repeated. A text such as 1 Corinthians 11:25 is read and the minister leads the congregation in drinking the wine.

5. The Communion cups are placed in cup racks normally provided in the pews. In their absence, deacons return to the congregation and collect the cups, placing the trays on the Communion table where they are again covered.

6. Deaconesses cover the whole Communion table. The minister gives a final prayer of thanksgiving and the congregation sings a final hymn.

7. In many churches, deacons stand at the door as people leave to collect a special offering for the poor, suggesting the ethical implications in participating in the Lord's Supper.³²⁵

II. Theology

Two basic questions confront us as we reflect on the Adventist understanding of the Lord's Supper. (1) What purpose is served by celebrating this ordinance? (2) In what sense is Christ present? The Adventist reply to the first question is that the Lord's Supper points to a past event with a present effect and a future hope. To the second question, they

³²⁵ This suggests that the Lord's Supper is not only for the sake of the church but also for the sake of the world. Lutheran theologian, Gordon Lathrop writes about the "economy of the Eucharist being in critical dialogue with other means of distributing food. (see Gordon Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Press, 1999), 165.

answer that Christ is present in a dynamic way through the Holy Spirit as He presides at the table amongst the gathered assembly. We now consider briefly those questions, looking at the Adventist understanding of the Lord's Supper and of Christ's presence.

The act of reception of bread and wine during the Lord's Supper is loaded with theological meanings. For Adventists, the Lord's Supper orients us to Christ's sacrifice, our present communion with Him, to a past event with a present effect and a future hope. This understanding is illustrated in *Thy Broken Body, Dear Lord*, a hymn for the Communion Service written by Adventist, Wayne Hooper.³²⁶

1

*Thy broken body, gracious Lord,
Is shadowed by this broken bread;
The wine which in this cup is poured,
Points to the blood which Thou hast shed.*

2

*And while we meet together thus,
We show that we are one in Thee;
Thy precious blood was shed for us,
Thy death, O Lord, hast set us free!*

3

*We have one hope that Thou wilt come,
Thee in the air we wait to see;
When Thou wilt give Thy saints a home,
And we shall ever reign with Thee.*

As we examine the practice of this ordinance, we find at least three key theological ideas emerging:

³²⁶ SDA Hymnal 410, *Thy Broken Body, Dear Lord*.

i. *Orientation to a past event, Christ's death*—The Lord's Supper is a commemoration by which Adventists, like other Christians, fulfill Christ's command, "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24). It celebrates Christ, the ultimate Passover, who brought deliverance from sin through His body which was broken for humanity and His blood of the new covenant that was shed for the remission of sins.³²⁷

The Lord's Supper commemorates the meal that points to Jesus' sacrifice.³²⁸ In sharing the bread and the wine, each believer remembers the death of Jesus. They give thanks for God's act of deliverance through this sublime sacrifice. In doing so, they see Christ confirming God's promise of salvation and giving the assurance of the forgiveness of sins that He secured at Calvary (Matthew 26:28). The theme of a perfect and sufficient sacrifice permeates the whole service. As such, the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the Gospel.³²⁹ Its primary function is to praise God for His gracious gift in Christ.

ii. *Orientation to a present reality, our participation*—For Adventists, the Lord's Supper is not just a memorial of the divine gift of salvation offered in the person of Christ. This ordinance also offers an opportunity for communion with Christ. Ellen G. White puts it this way:

As we receive the bread and wine symbolizing Christ's broken body and spilled blood, we in imagination join in the scene of Communion in the upper chamber. We seem to be passing through the garden consecrated by the agony of Him who bore the sins of the world. We witness the struggle by which our reconciliation with God was obtained. Christ is set forth crucified among us.³³⁰

In other words, by partaking of the bread and wine, the believer enters into the story of Jesus. The final scenes of His earthly life are grasped by the imagination to

³²⁷ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 539.

³²⁸ Norman G. Gulley, "Ordinances of the Church," 204

³²⁹ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 74.

³³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 661.

construct a vivid image of Christ's sacrifice. This act of beholding is not merely a mental act of recollection. The Lord's Supper represents the presence of the risen Christ amongst His gathered people. By participating in the Lord's Supper, believers become partakers in Christ's life, ingesting in their own lives the benefits of His sacrifice that remain available and effective to all humanity.

Participants at the Lord's Table do not only commune with the Lord, they also commune with one another, providing a strong basis for Christian unity.³³¹ As Adventists officially declare, "[w]e experience the strongest and deepest sense of community at the Lord's table."³³² The emphasis is on relationships amongst God's people. "The fellowship with Jesus produces fellowship with those who belong to Him. Because we partake of one bread, we become one body. The Lord's Supper contributes to the unity of the church."³³³ Far from being a mere ceremony, the Lord's Supper manifests what it means to be members of the body of Christ. The issue is one of congruence, where the act of worship fully expresses the quality of Christian love toward God and toward brothers and sisters.

iii. *Orientation to a Future Hope*— In celebrating the Lord's Supper, Adventists not only remember what happened (*anamnesis*) and participate in it by faith (*koinonia*), but also look forward eschatologically to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9) in the kingdom of God. From a perspective shaped by soteriology, they move to one shaped by eschatology.

³³¹ Dederen, "The Church," in *Handbook of SDA Theology*, 557; C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 72-73.

³³² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 232.

³³³ Ekkehardt Mueller, "Seventh-day Adventists and the Lord's Supper," *Ministry*, April 2004, 12.

For Adventists, the Lord's Supper not only points back to Calvary but also points forward to the New Jerusalem when redeemed humanity will sit at Christ's banquet table in God's eternal kingdom. For this reason, "Jesus wished to be remembered in the celebration of the Lord's Supper until He returned."³³⁴ Accordingly, the Lord's Supper reminds the church to live in a healthy tension between Calvary and the New Jerusalem. The body of Christ finds its identity and security between the memory of an accomplished sacrifice and the hope of a glorious future. The church is still a pilgrim people, living between the already and the not yet. The Lord's Supper is "designed to keep this hope vivid in the minds of the disciples."³³⁵ Ultimately, the Lord's Supper discloses a vision of God's rule that will be fully revealed at the end of time when the whole of creation will be totally renewed and fully reconciled with its Creator. With this eschatological vision, the church looks forward in joy and hope to the heavenly banquet in the world to come.³³⁶

III. *The Adventist Understanding of Christ's Presence*

Christians attach diverse interpretations to the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper.³³⁷ How do Adventists understand this hotly debated matter? Consistently throughout Adventist history, the bread and the wine have been seen as symbols of the

³³⁴ Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 596 (cf. Matt 26:9; cf. Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16-18; 1 Cor. 11:26).

³³⁵ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 659.

³³⁶ Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 598.

³³⁷ See Russell D. Moore, *Understanding Four Views of the Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2007); Horton Davies, *Bread of Life and Cup of Joy: New Ecumenical Perspectives on the Eucharist* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Gordon T. Smith, *The Lord's Supper: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

body and blood of Christ commemorating Christ's passion and death.³³⁸ For them, the emblems do not work *ex opere operato* but pointed forward then and back now to Christ's body that was broken and His blood that was shed.

However, the Lord's Supper is more than a memorial meal for Adventists. They do not share the Catholic view of a 'real presence' of Christ in the elements. In contrast, "the real presence of Christ is not identified with the elements, but with the gathered body of believers."³³⁹ Their official position is clear: "In this experience of Communion, Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people."³⁴⁰

Kiesler, in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, expands on this notion of Christ's presence:

By eating and drinking, human beings take nourishment into their bodies. By food and drink they are physically strengthened as what they take becomes part of their very cells. By drinking the cup and eating the bread, Christ's disciples become partakers of Christ's life. Not only do they eat with Him in fellowship, they appropriate His qualities into their lives.³⁴¹

Although Adventists insist that believers do not literally partake of the flesh and blood of Christ, they also resist a purely 'memorialistic' definition of the Lord's Supper, devoid of Christ's actual presence.³⁴² Ellen G. White made it clear in an article on the Lord's Supper and foot washing: "It is on these, his own appointments, that he meets with

³³⁸ For instance, compare *Signs of the Times* March 25, 1880 and Gulley, 204-205; Joel Musvosvi, "This Is My Body." *Adventist Review*, May 15, 2007.

³³⁹ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 72.

³⁴⁰ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 225.

³⁴¹ Herbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 597.

³⁴² C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 76-78.

them and energizes his people by his personal presence.”³⁴³ The Adventist *Church Manual* echoes the same idea, “The service of the Lord’s Supper is just as holy today as it was when instituted by Jesus Christ. Jesus is still present when this sacred ordinance is celebrated.”³⁴⁴ Accordingly, “Adventist communion is no simple memorial- it is a revealed awareness of God’s purpose in creation, redemption, and ultimate fulfilment.”³⁴⁵ As noted above, their liturgy includes prayers of “blessings”³⁴⁶ (not simply of thanksgiving) on the bread and the wine. Yet, the bread and the wine do not bestow any grace of themselves. To be fully effective, the blessings of the Lord’s Supper must be received by faith.

The key notion here is the role played by the Holy Spirit in the Lord’s Supper. The emblems are tokens of salvation and in no way replace the role of the Spirit in His sanctifying ministry. In the Lord’s Supper, Christ meets with His people and is received by them. “Here the focus is on Christ, rather than on the sacraments.”³⁴⁷ Divine life is communicated by the presence of the resurrected Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is ever present to draw the worshippers closer to their Lord.

As a result, worship is given to God above, in and with Christ through the Holy Spirit, reflecting both aspects of transcendence and immanence. This sense of being in the

³⁴³ Ellen G. White, “The Lord’s Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing,” *Review and Herald*, May 31, 1898.

³⁴⁴ *Church Manual*, 2015, 124.

³⁴⁵ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 76.

³⁴⁶ *Church Manual*, 2015, 182-183; *Minister’s Handbook*, 171.

³⁴⁷ Norman G. Gulley, “Ordinances of the Church,” 208.

presence of God during the Lord's Supper is to be lived as "a most sacred and joyous occasion."³⁴⁸

As is evident, Seventh-day Adventists have not attempted to define the nature of Christ's presence with exact precision. This is reflected in the extemporaneous prayers offered by the ministers and elders as they lead in the Lord's Supper. The prayers might sometimes reflect a Zwinglian or Calvinist understanding of the Lord's Supper, pointing to an underdeveloped Adventist theology of the ordinances. For Adventists, the greatest concern today is not formulating precise theological language, it is to experience the living reality of the resurrected Christ who sovereignly manifests His presence in their midst. ³⁴⁹

4.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have examined the central elements of Adventist worship. Our study did not focus solely on the practice of Adventist worship. We also looked at how Sabbath-keeping is central to Adventist public worship. Adventists observe the seventh-day Sabbath, as a day of rest and worship. The Sabbath gathering and cycle of the week form their basic Christian *ordo*. It informs the way they interpret and organise their corporate worship.

We have also highlighted that Adventist worship acknowledges God as the central and defining reality in their gatherings. Their worship aims to be Christ-centred, Spirit-led and participatory in nature. Adventist worship is centred on the preaching and hearing of God's Word. The ordinances are practiced on a quarterly basis.

³⁴⁸ *Church Manual*, 2015, 124, 126.

³⁴⁹ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 70-73.

After examining the different elements of Adventist worship, we are now ready to start exploring more deeply its theology. In the following chapter, we will look at the works of one of the co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen G. White, whose writings continue to influence the way in which Adventists approach the subject of worship.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 UNDERSTANDING ADVENTIST WORSHIP THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

The three co-founders of Seventh-day Adventism each contributed significantly to the denomination's understanding and practice of worship. The first among them, Joseph Bates, through his contacts with Seventh Day Baptists, steered the Advent believers from Sunday-keeping to the observance of Saturday as their day of worship in literal obedience to the Ten Commandments. The second, James White, contributed immensely to Adventist hymnody through the constant publication of hymnals for the fledgling Advent movement. However, it was his wife, Ellen Gould White, the third co-founder of Seventh-day Adventism, who made the greatest and most enduring contribution to Seventh-day Adventist worship. It is safe to say that it would be almost impossible to understand Adventist worship without paying close attention to her writings on the subject.

Ellen White (nee Harmon) was born November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine to devout Methodist parents.¹ At the age of nine, she suffered a serious accident when a stone was thrown at her face, stopping her from continuing formal schooling and

¹ For more comprehensive biographies of Ellen White's life, see Ellen White, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851); idem, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1860); idem, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 1:9-112; idem, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915); A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*; George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996); idem, *Walking With Ellen White: The Human Interest Story* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999).

weakening her physically for the rest of her life. Following her conversion to William Miller's teachings on Christ's imminent Second Coming, Ellen White joined the Millerite movement and subsequently became a leading figure in Seventh-day Adventism. During her seventy years of ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist movement, she significantly shaped the denomination's spirituality and organisation through her voluminous literary output. Seventh-day Adventists believe her instruction and directives, although subordinate to the Bible, were divinely given.² As a result, Ellen White's theological insights on the subject of worship have had a considerable influence on Seventh-day Adventist worship. Her writings help us to better understand the practice and theology of Adventist worship.

5.1 COUNSELS IN THE CONTEXT OF MINISTRY

Despite her influence on the Adventist understanding of worship, Ellen White never claimed to be a theologian and never wrote a book on a theological system or a theology of worship. Adventist theologian, Fritz Guy, puts it this way: "to the extent that her thinking was theological, it was intuitive rather than deliberate, informal rather than structured, practical and occasional rather than theoretical and systematic."³

² Fundamental Beliefs; Ellen G. White herself continually emphasised that "the Bible, and the Bible only, is the rule of faith and duty" (Ellen White, *Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 204, 205), "the only rule of faith and doctrine" (*Review and Herald*, July 17, 1888). She held that all Christian writings, including her own, need to be tested by the teachings of the Bible itself (*Great Controversy*, vii). Here is her basic understanding of her ministry: "Others have called me a prophetess, but I have never assumed that title. I have not felt it was my duty thus to designate myself. Those who boldly assume that they are prophets in this our day are often a reproach to the cause of Christ. ...My work includes much more than this name signifies. I regard myself as a messenger, entrusted by the Lord by messages for His people... In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible. His Word is true, and in Him there is no variableness, or shadow of turning." (*Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:35-37).

³ Fritz Guy, "Theology," in Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 144.

Ellen White was a layperson writing to simple fellow believers regarding common church issues. A large portion of her writings on worship emerged from her engagement in addressing local concerns about failing worship practices in the nascent Adventist movement. Her commitment was to a practical, pastoral vision that was concerned with renewing and nurturing Adventist believers into a more authentic Christian experience with God. Hence, Ellen White's reflections on worship did not develop in a vacuum. She reacted and reflected with what was before and around her; she compared it with past denominational history and processed everything through her understanding of who God is, from her experiences, and most importantly in the light of the Scriptures. In short, she engaged in some form of primary and secondary theology in a Free Church context. By so doing, she sought to make explicit what is implicit in Adventist worship by integrating a number of Christian doctrines.

My task in this chapter is to elucidate and systematize her views on Adventist worship⁴ through the examination of her letters, magazine articles, pamphlets and brief references in her devotional books.

To understand Ellen White's views of corporate worship, one needs to remember that she predominantly wrote to fellow believers with the Saturday gatherings in mind. Her understanding of the Sabbath illuminated and informed her vision of corporate worship. So, before exploring her understanding of corporate worship, we will briefly consider her understanding of the Sabbath. This consideration is critical in view of the

⁴ The best attempt yet at discovering Ellen White's understanding of worship is Denis Fortin's article *Ellen G. White's Theology of Worship and Liturgy*. Last accessed on 31st August, 2017 at https://www.andrews.edu/sem/inministry/uploads/2015summersyllabi/chmn523_worship-word_and_music_fall13-cu-david_williams-fortin_article-egw-theology-of-worship-and-liturgy.pdf. It was later modified and reproduced in chapter 4 (pp. 81-101) of Angel Manuel Rodriguez's, ed., *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church* (Silver Spring, MD: The Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016).

fact that an understanding of Adventist worship pivots around the Sabbath.

5.2 ELLEN WHITE’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE SABBATH

The first possible contact Ellen G. White had with the seventh-day Sabbath question happened in the summer of 1846 during the course of a visit to Joseph Bates in New Bedford, Massachusetts. When Bates urged his views of the Sabbath upon White, she did not subscribe to his position. She thought that the Sabbath was unimportant and that Bates “erred in dwelling upon the fourth commandment more than the other nine.”⁵ The same month she married James White. Soon after, they studied Bates’ 48-page pamphlet entitled *The Sabbath, A Perpetual Sign*⁶ and became convinced that Bates’ views were scriptural. As a result, they “began to observe the Bible Sabbath, and to teach and defend it.”⁷

Ellen White understood that the Sabbath was “given for the benefit of man and for the honour of God.”⁸ This attention to the doxological and experiential meaning of the Sabbath as a divine gift guided her thinking throughout her ministry. We now look at White’s understanding of the meaning and observance of the Sabbath.

5.2.1 The Meaning of the Sabbath

Ellen White emphasises certain theological motifs and themes in her treatment of

⁵ Ellen White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 95.

⁶ Joseph Bates, *The Seventh-Day Sabbath: A Perpetual Sign*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed. (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847).

⁷ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1868), 1:75.

⁸ Ellen White, *The Story of Redemption* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1947), 141.

the Sabbath.⁹ They function like a theological summary of God's activities in favour of humanity. In White's thinking, the continuing significance of the seventh-day is characteristically related to creation, redemption and sanctification.

5.2.1.1 Sabbath and Creation.

A necessary starting-point for any consideration of Ellen White's understanding of the Sabbath is the creation story. Creation finds its culmination in the Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3). Ellen White views it as "a God-given memorial."¹⁰ Commenting on the creation story, she writes that God "placed His sanctity upon this day and blessed it and hallowed it as a day of rest,"¹¹ thus highlighting its uniqueness.¹² What was God's ultimate purpose in giving the Sabbath at creation? White answers that "it was designed to keep the living God ever before the minds of men as the source of being and the object of reverence and worship."¹³ From that perspective, the Sabbath serves as "the witness to His [God's] claim upon man's reverence and homage."¹⁴ In essence, the Sabbath, not only reveals the extreme worthiness of God as Creator but also reveals our theocentric and doxological

⁹ Further reading: "Doctrine of the Sabbath," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 1115-1118; Kenneth Strand, "The Sabbath." In *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed., Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 529-535; Anna Galeniece, "The Purpose and Significance of the Biblical Sabbath in Ellen White's Writings," *The Bible and Sabbath* (Nairobi, Kenya: Adventist Theological Society, Adventist University of Africa Chapter, 2017), 102-113.

¹⁰ Ellen White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 239; *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventists Publishing Association, 1864), 3:90.

¹¹ Ellen White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1955), 59.

¹² Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1901), 6:349; *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 48.

¹³ Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 446.

identity as His creatures.

The Sabbath holds special significance because of Christ's involvement in creation (John 1:1-3). White points out: "Since He [Christ] made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and Sanctifier."¹⁵ Ultimately, the Sabbath "is a token of the love and power of Christ."¹⁶ In essence, White's theological conviction for the Sabbath is Christocentric. This becomes even more distinct in her consideration of salvation history.

5.2.1.2 Sabbath and Redemption.

Sabbath and Christ's redeeming ministry are intimately linked in the writings of Ellen White. For her, the concept of rest and the theme of redemption are interconnected. She comments as follows:

To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ's creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.¹⁷

White emphasises that there is no dichotomy in salvation history: "He [Christ] who made the Sabbath did not abolish it, nailing it to the cross."¹⁸ Moreover, the Decalogue, of which the Sabbath forms a part, was given by Christ for the benefit of the human race.¹⁹ Interestingly, Ellen White sees significance in the fact that, just as Christ

¹⁵ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 288.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 630.

¹⁹ *Sons and Daughters of God*, 53; *The Desire of Ages*, 288.

rested on the Sabbath upon the completion of creation, He also rested upon His work of redemption.²⁰

Reflecting on Sabbath polemics in Christ's ministry, White argues that the Saviour was never against the institution "He Himself had given."²¹ Rather, she insists that Christ was against its Pharisaic and rabbinic interpretation. By challenging their views, Christ rescued the Sabbath from legalism, keeping it in its divine perspective while deepening its intended meaning.²² White claims that "the miracles He performed on the Sabbath were all for the relief of the afflicted," testifying to God's merciful character.²³

5.2.1.3 Sabbath and Sanctification.

"To remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8) implies understanding its sacred importance.²⁴ Regarding the Sabbath, White insists that "every moment is consecrated, holy time."²⁵ In other words, the entire day, not only the worship hour is to be consecrated to God. This puts the worship hour within a greater framework of holy time. Only in remembering the holiness of the seventh-day do we gain a better appreciation of the holiness of corporate worship.

²⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, 769.

²¹ *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 183.

²² *The Desire of Ages*, 283-289; *Manuscript* 192, 1897.

²³ *The Desire of Ages*, 538.

²⁴ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1901), 6:353.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 356.

For Ellen White, the God of creation and of salvation is also the God of sanctification. The Sabbath calls attention to God's creative and re-creative activity. White links the Sabbath's creational and soteriological dimensions to sanctification as follows: "The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; it recalls man's primeval glory, and thus witnesses to God's purpose to re-create us in His own image."²⁶ This means that the Sabbath involves the sanctification of the life that God gives in Christ. On the basis of Ezekiel 20:12, Ellen White declares that "the Sabbath is a sign of Christ's power to make us holy."²⁷ She places the sanctification of the Sabbath into the bigger picture of sanctification by faith. This can be seen clearly in the following extract:

True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character. And the Sabbath is the sign of obedience. He who from the heart obeys the fourth commandment will obey the whole law. He is sanctified through obedience.²⁸

The essential point here is that Sabbath-keeping has to do with communion with God. It is a celebratory symbol of our relationship with God that is manifested through obedience. This makes Sabbath-keeping not only a spiritual but also a moral issue.

True Sabbath-keeping is the result of a life of sanctification that is made possible only through Christ. White concedes that "[t]he best efforts that man in his own strength can make are valueless . . . The one who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility."²⁹ She further insists that "[i]n order to

²⁶ Ellen White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 250.

²⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, 288.

²⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:350.

²⁹ Ellen White, *Faith and Works* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1979), 93-94.

keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy.” How is that possible? She explains: “Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.”³⁰ The Sabbath symbolizes this new identity and status that the believer receives through faith in Christ. Ellen White puts it this way: “As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.”³¹

Up to this point, we have explored the theological meaning of the Sabbath in Ellen White’s writing. We will now briefly consider Sabbath-keeping practices.

5.2.2 Observance of the Sabbath

Much of Ellen White’s reflections on the Sabbath were as a response to failing Sabbath-keeping practices within early Adventism. She expressed concern about youth who had lost respect for the Sabbath, going where and doing what they please, having no pleasure for religious meetings or for sacred and eternal things to the indifference of their parents.³² She also protested against the sentiment held by some who considered the worship hour as a “drudgery.”³³ She traces the problem to a lack of spirituality and proper instructions.³⁴ She exhorts believers to make the Sabbath “the sweetest, the most blessed day of the week.”³⁵

According to White, the Sabbath affords humanity a unique opportunity for

³⁰ *Desire of Ages*, 283.

³¹ *Desire of Ages*, 288.

³² Ellen White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 527-533.

³³ *Ibid.*, 529-531.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 531.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 532.

communion with God, nature, and one another.³⁶ Her fundamental claim is that the Sabbath is the high day of the week. Ellen White variously describes it as the most joyful day of the week,³⁷ the sweetest and most blessed,³⁸ a day of blessing,³⁹ a day of delight,⁴⁰ and a day of joy.⁴¹ Because of its sacred character, the Sabbath requires material and spiritual preparation to be fully appreciated.⁴²

5.2.2.1 Friday Preparation.

In volume 6 of *Testimonies to the Church*,⁴³ Ellen White introduces the Sabbath as the high day of the week.⁴⁴ The whole week must be dedicated to its preparation to gain the maximum benefit from its observance. However, Sabbath preparation, according to White, must not be understood as “a legal matter.”⁴⁵ Sabbath-keeping is essentially a profound spiritual experience.

Ellen White predominantly locates Sabbath preparation and observance in the

³⁶ Ellen White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 251.

³⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:359.

³⁸ *Child Guidance*, 532.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 529.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 531.

⁴¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:349.

⁴² Further reading: Jo Ann Davidson, “Sabbath Observance of,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 1118-1120; Emery John Lorntz, *Ellen G. White's Concept of Spirituality in Relation to Contemporary Christian Theology*, PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2000, 168-175; Yoshio Murakami, *Ellen G. White's Views of the Sabbath in the Historical, Religious, and Social Context of Nineteenth-Century America*, PhD dissertation, Drew University, 1994, 77-95.

⁴³ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:349.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 353.

family setting. She highlights the importance of daily family worship as a preparation for the Sabbath corporate service.⁴⁶ In harmony with Luke 23:54, she regards Friday as “the special preparation day”⁴⁷ when things are to be completed early enough to allow maximum time for communion with God. The preparation is both practical and spiritual. Practical preparation includes cooking, readying clothes and shoes, and bathing.⁴⁸ The spiritual preparation involves self-examination, reconciliation with families and church members.⁴⁹ Sabbath starts with sundown worship on Friday evening “to read God's word, to sing and pray.”⁵⁰

5.2.2.2 Saturday Experience.

On Saturday morning, members of the family must get ready to attend church early while making sure “no unholy feelings come into the home.”⁵¹ Attending Sabbath School and church service occupy only a part of the Sabbath. For Ellen White, “[t]he portion remaining to the family may be made the most sacred and precious season of all the Sabbath hours.”⁵² The essence of White’s argument is that holiness is not limited to the corporate act of worship but to the entire lawful use of the day. Hence, all activities that distract from communion with God are discouraged.⁵³ Secular labour and thoughts

⁴⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* 6: 353-354.

⁴⁷ *Testimonies*, 6:354.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 355.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 356.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 358.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 357.

are not to intrude Sabbath-keeping.⁵⁴ Conversations on common or worldly topics are to be avoided.⁵⁵ The mind must be focused on God and on spiritual matters during the sacred hours.

Afternoon idleness is also discouraged. The Sabbath is a day of rest, not a day of indolence to be spent in useless inactivity.⁵⁶ Ellen White encourages parents to take walks with their children where nature in its beauty bear witness to its Creator and testify to His forbearance and love.⁵⁷ Such occasions can be an opportunity to share “the way of salvation.” This theme of nature as God’s textbook is recurrent in White’s writings. For her, “nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love,”⁵⁸ and “the Sabbath bids us behold in His created works the glory of the Creator.”⁵⁹ For this reason, Sabbath-keepers should seize the opportunity whenever possible to be outside to study God’s messages in nature.⁶⁰ White comments that the day of rest finds its fitting climax in prayer and song.⁶¹

Hence, for Ellen White, seventh-day Sabbath keeping is much more than going to church on Saturday. It involves a 24-hour holy time period designed to bring us closer to

⁵⁴ Ellen White, *op.cit.*, 355, 360. See also Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 136; *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1871), 2:583; *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1881), 4:249, 249; *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 296.

⁵⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:360.

⁵⁶ See for instance, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 136-137; *Desire of Ages*, 207.

⁵⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:357.

⁵⁸ *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), 9.

⁵⁹ *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900), 25.

⁶⁰ *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1871), 2:583.

⁶¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:356.

God, to nature and to one another. This kind of Sabbath observance has a “spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life.”⁶² Thus, weekly Sabbath-keeping cannot be dissociated from daily life. Their interconnectedness means that the way we keep the Sabbath impacts the way we live; inversely, our daily experience with God affects the quality of our Sabbath experience.⁶³

The Sabbath also has an ethical dimension and social implications. Devotion to God involves helping those in need.⁶⁴ Acts of kindness and necessity are to be performed, people’s needs are to be met, the sick are to be cared for, the sorrowing are to be comforted and suffering is to be relieved.⁶⁵ The importance of this point can be appreciated in her response to critics who once questioned a fellow believer’s Sabbath observance:

We told our friends that in the matter of keeping the Sabbath, we studied the example and teachings of Christ whose Sabbaths were often spent in earnest effort to heal and to teach; that we believed that one of our sisters who was nursing a sick family was keeping the Sabbath as much as the one who was leading a division in the Sabbath school.⁶⁶

It is important to note that Ellen White does not see Sabbath observance as regulations checklist to earn divine favour. Rather, Sabbath-keeping can be regarded as an experience of liberation from the pressures of this world to enjoy weekly restoration through a deepening of our relationship with God, nature, and one another.

⁶² *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:353.

⁶³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:353.

⁶⁴ *Child Guidance*, 527-537.

⁶⁵ See for instance, Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 307-308; *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1871), 2:702-703; *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:360; *Desire of Ages*, 207; *My Life Today* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 231.

⁶⁶ Ellen White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 3:259.

Ellen White observes that those who gather “together to worship the Lord on the day which He has blessed and made holy, have a right to claim the rich blessings of Jehovah.”⁶⁷ The Sabbath hence offers a major theological and experiential motivation to engage meaningfully in corporate worship. With the foregoing background on Ellen White’s understanding of the Sabbath, we are now ready to explore her understanding of corporate worship.

5.3 ELLEN WHITE’S UNDERSTANDING OF WORSHIP

Ellen White wrestled with practical issues surrounding Adventist worship. One clear example is the article she wrote in 1889 at a time when it seemed that Adventist spirituality had made a turn for the worse. Here is what she wrote:

There has been a great change, not for the better, but for the worse, in the habits and customs of the people in reference to religious worship. The precious, the sacred, things which connect us with God are fast losing their hold upon our minds and hearts, and are being brought down to the level of common things . . . Reverence for the house of God has become almost extinct. Sacred things and places are not discerned; the holy and exalted are not appreciated.⁶⁸

The basic idea that Ellen White develops here is that worship belongs to a sacred sphere and should be approached with discernment and reverence. Worship becomes highly problematic whenever the distinction between the sacred and the ordinary becomes blurred.⁶⁹

Ellen pens her basic understanding of corporate worship as follows:

To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ’s representatives, are

⁶⁷ Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate), 347.

⁶⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:491-5.

⁶⁹ *Manuscript* 5, 1912.

God's appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth.⁷⁰

The foregoing statements lay the foundation for an exploration of Ellen White's view of corporate worship. Her view is based on an awareness of God's active presence in the life of the assembled community. It entails a wholistic understanding of worship that embraces heaven and earth, individual piety and the corporate body, the gathering and perfecting of the saints, the present and the future. It is this broad understanding of worship that I want to explore in more detail as I look into the bulk of Ellen White's writings on the subject of corporate worship.

In this section, I have regrouped her views on corporate worship under two categories. First, I will explore her views on God's participation in our worship. Second, I will study her views on our participation in the worship of God. Under the rubric of God's participation, I will consider White's Trinitarian way of looking at corporate worship, i.e. a worship that is offered to God the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. Under our participation, I will address her emphasis on the congregation's response in reverence and joy through songs, sermon, prayer, and giving.

5.3.1 God's Participation in Our Worship

Ellen White was acutely aware that without God's initiative, presence and enabling, Christian worship automatically deteriorates into an anthropocentric exercise. Instead of flowing from divine grace, it becomes humanity's effort trying to please God. This is why she highlighted that God should be central in worship.

⁷⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:491.

5.3.1.1 Worship Begins with God.

Central to Ellen White's insight on corporate worship is the idea that nothing other than God can help us ascribe glory to Him. Before continuing further, it is important to note that her reference to the house of God as the gate of heaven (a clear reference to Jacob's experience in Genesis 28) suggests a connection between heaven and earth and that this connection is God Himself. Ellen White considers the house of worship as "the audience of the Most-High"⁷¹ and a "sacred spot."⁷² In her understanding, weekly corporate worship happens in a "sacred spot" on a "sacred day." However, the totality of Ellen White's writings in no way suggests that she believed God appears only at certain consecrated places or at certain times. Rather, it simply implies that the church at worship comes into contact with God in a distinct and unparalleled way. It is an initiative from above, not from below.

Ellen White constantly highlights the fact that it is God's nature, actions and initiatives that make Him exclusively worthy of worship and that no person or object should occupy that place and receive the honour and glory that is due solely to Him. "Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the source and sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship."⁷³ Hence, worship starts with the acknowledgement of God's unique identity and unsurpassable greatness. The emphasis here is on the theocentric nature of worship. Essentially, worship exists because God is who He is. His nature and attributes elicit reverential awe and our highest praise. He is

⁷¹ Ellen White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 2:475.

⁷² *Manuscript 23*, 1886.

⁷³ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1890), 305.

“the only true and living God, to whom our worship and reverence are due.”⁷⁴

The foundational assumption here is that correct knowledge is inseparable from true worship. The comprehension of God’s character has profound implications for the way we worship Him. “The more just and lively views we have of God’s character, presence and glory, the more we shall seek to honour him.”⁷⁵ To know God as He is, is to love and worship Him, and to worship Him is to love Him and know Him more. Rightly understood, there is a reciprocal relationship between knowledge and adoration, theology and worship.

5.3.1.1.1 *Creator*

Ellen White insists that since everything in the universe belongs to the category of the created, it is reprehensible to allow any object to occupy the true centre of worship. “God is to be the subject of thought, the object of worship; and anything that attracts the mind from the solemn, sacred service is an offense to Him.”⁷⁶ As such, she also cautions about the danger of using images in worship.⁷⁷

Clearly, worship begins with God, not only because of who He is but also because of what He has done: He is the Creator. “The duty to worship God is based upon the fact

⁷⁴ *The Youth’s Instructor*, July 7, 1898; *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 133.

⁷⁵ *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 22, 1858, 77.

⁷⁶ *Manuscript* 11, 1850.

⁷⁷ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 306: “The second commandment forbids the worship of the true God by images or similitudes. Many heathen nations claimed that their images were mere figures or symbols by which the Deity was worshipped, but God has declared such worship to be sin. The attempt to represent the Eternal One by material objects would lower man’s conception of God. The mind, turned away from the infinite perfection of Jehovah, would be attracted to the creature rather than to the Creator. And as his conceptions of God were lowered, so would man become degraded.”

that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence.”⁷⁸ He is “the source of (our) being and” hence “the object of reverence and worship.”⁷⁹ Ellen White succinctly summarizes that biblical truth with these words: “The true ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in the distinction between the Creator and his creatures. This great fact can never become obsolete, and must never be forgotten.”⁸⁰ Surely, “God’s claim to reverence and worship above the gods of the heathen is based on the fact that He is the Creator.”⁸¹

The absolute distinction, the transcendence of God the Creator, is what makes Him “the only object of worship.”⁸² The vast gulf separating God from His creation means that God’s will is the ultimate cause of everything that exists. He is the ground of our being, the source of our existence. We are “to render homage to no object save God, the maker of the heavens and the earth, to whom alone reverence and honour are due.”⁸³ For those who understand this central fact of creation, worship becomes an obligation. Clearly, in worship, we declare the reason for our existence and proclaim our duty as rational beings. Our ultimate purpose is to give supreme honour and glory to the Creator. “This living God is worthy of our thought, our praise, our adoration, as the Creator of the world, as the Creator of man. We are to praise God, for we are fearfully and wonderfully

⁷⁸ *The Great Controversy*, 436.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁸⁰ *The Great Controversy*, 437-438. Quoting John Nevins Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*, 1873, 510.

⁸¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 336.

⁸² Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1878), 3:364.

⁸³ *The Signs of the Times*, February 12, 1880.

made.”⁸⁴

To speak of worshipping God is at once to raise the question of the nature and character of the God we worship. A correct understanding of who God is, according to Ellen White, is foundational to true worship. The implication is that in order to worship the true God, we need to do so in the way He has revealed Himself to us. Reflecting on Moses’ experience with God, Ellen White writes: “When we are able to comprehend the character of God, as did Moses, we, too, shall make haste to bow in adoration and praise.”⁸⁵

5.3.1.1.2 *Worship the Father*

This knowledge of God cannot be reduced to mere abstraction or speculation. It has to do with God’s revelation of Himself. “We can never by searching find out God . . . No mortal mind can penetrate the secrecy in which the Mighty One dwells and works. We can comprehend no more of his dealings with us and the motives that actuate him than he sees fit to reveal.”⁸⁶ For Christians, the full revelation of God happened supremely in the Christ event as reported in Scripture. According to Ellen White, Christ’s most unique revelation of God was His depiction of Him as Father.

Commenting on the Lord’s Prayer, Ellen White points out:

He taught man to address the supreme Ruler by the new name “Our Father.” This name represents our true relation to him, and when spoken sincerely by human lips, it is music in the ears of God. Christ leads us to the throne of God by a new and living way.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 7:373.

⁸⁵ *The Review and Herald*, Nov. 17, 1891.

⁸⁶ *The Review and Herald*, April 7, 1885.

⁸⁷ Ellen White, *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, June 9, 1909. Reflecting on our response to the Father in worship, Ellen White writes: “Our God should be regarded as a tender, merciful father. The service of God

Father is who God is and for Ellen White “when from the heart we say, ‘Our Father,’ we worship God in truth. This petition carries the suppliant away from earth and human beings to the One who is unerring in judgment, compassionate, merciful, pure, and holy.”⁸⁸ The One who is “so much more exalted, so holy, so pure”⁸⁹ avails Himself to us and welcomes us into His presence as a loving Father. Hence, worship is not a mere duty imposed upon us;⁹⁰ it is also a privilege.⁹¹ Ellen White holds that when we realise that God is the One seeking us as a loving Father, our attitude becomes one of gratitude.⁹²

The basic idea that Ellen White develops here is that worship is done in the sphere of grace. She states this point succinctly: “The throne of grace is itself the highest attraction because it is occupied by One who permits us to call Him Father.”⁹³ Ellen White emphasises that it is this understanding that allows genuine worship. The Father’s grace precedes worship and it is that same grace that elicits and accompanies worship. Belief in the Father means belief in a loving and compassionate God. This relational component comprises the key to our understanding and enacting of worship. For Ellen

should not be looked upon as a heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in his work . . . He is their best friend, and when they worship him, he expects to be with them to bless and comfort them, and fill their hearts with joy and love... The Lord desires that those who come to worship him shall carry away with them precious thoughts of his care and love that they may be cheered in all the employments of daily life, that they may have grace to deal honestly and faithfully in all things.” (*The Review and Herald*, January 14, 1890).

⁸⁸ *The Signs of the Times*, Review and Herald, March 29, 1905.

⁸⁹ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1871), 2:564.

⁹⁰ *Review and Herald*, April 14, 1885.

⁹¹ *Letter* 22, 1890.

⁹² *The Review and Herald*, November 30, 1905.

⁹³ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1901), 6:363.

White, worship is not predominantly based on what we *do* but on how we *relate* to God. We cannot truly worship God unless we relate to Him as Father.

5.3.1.2 *The Attack on Worship.*

Yet, the question remains: If worship is so crucial and so beneficial, why is it that people fail to perceive the Father's love and as a result view worship as "a heart-saddening, distressing exercise?"⁹⁴ A key theme in Ellen White's writings is that humanity is at the centre of a great controversy between God and Satan. A rival kingdom, led by God's enemy, is working ferociously to denigrate God's character, thus keeping us from obeying and worshipping Him. "In all ages Satan has tried continually to misrepresent the character of God, to lead people to cling to a false concept of the Creator, and then to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love."⁹⁵ Ellen White argues that one of the most effective ways Satan endeavours to do this is through false worship:

It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law and gives men license to sin. At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God so that they regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion and expressed in modes of worship. Thus the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God. By perverted conceptions of the divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of Deity; and horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry.⁹⁶

The basic idea that Ellen White develops here is that wrong theology ("false conceptions of God . . . perverted conceptions of the divine attributes") ultimately

⁹⁴ Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, 103.

⁹⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 338.

⁹⁶ *The Great Controversy*, 569.

manifests itself in corrupt liturgy (“expressed in modes of worship . . . embodied in false systems of religion”). To put this differently, the way we worship reflects our theological understanding and convictions. Ellen White asserts that an erroneous belief system ultimately leads to false worship and that false worship distorts our perception of God. In a sense, that evil system becomes self-perpetuating. This explains why she insists that God be worshipped on His own terms, not through “proud believers in human theories, and exponents of false systems of worship.”⁹⁷ The basic point here is that worship not initiated by God is a distorted reflection of His character.

Sadly, one of the most profound effects of the great controversy is that men have become idolaters. “Man has revolted from God and has endeavored to supply the place of God with other objects of worship.”⁹⁸ Even among Christians the temptation to idolatry is ever present, whether it is prosperity, talent, recreation, fashion, fame, self-promotion, selfish pride, money, sensuality or base passion.⁹⁹ Idolatry dislodges God from the centre of our affection and allegiance. “Anything that is made the subject of undue thought and admiration, absorbing the mind, is a god chosen before the Lord.”¹⁰⁰ “Anything that diverts the mind from God assumes the form of an idol.”¹⁰¹ “Anything which tends to abate our love for God, or to interfere with the service due Him, becomes thereby an

⁹⁷ *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 272.

⁹⁸ *That I May Know Him* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1964), 206.

⁹⁹ For more details on Ellen White’s understanding of idolatry, see *Manuscript Releases*, 7:372-373; *Manuscript* 62, 1886, 28, 29; *Manuscript* 17, 1898; *Manuscript* 126, 1901; *The Signs of the Times*, January 26, 1882; *The Great Controversy*, 167; *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), 104; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 306; *Review and Herald*, May 25, 1886;

¹⁰⁰ *Manuscript* 126, 1901.

¹⁰¹ Ellen White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955) 57.

idol.”¹⁰²

5.3.2 Worship through Christ

In harmony with traditional Christian views, Ellen White firmly believes that “the Father came in vital connection with the world through his well-beloved Son, and the revelation of divine truth through the Son was designed to draw men to the Father.”¹⁰³ Christ came to reveal the truth about God’s character. “Christ’s mission on the earth was to reveal to men that God was not a despot but a heavenly Father, full of love and mercy for His children.”¹⁰⁴ Ellen White argues that in the time of Christ’s earthly ministry, the Jewish people were worshipping without true understanding.¹⁰⁵ They did not appreciate the fact that the entire sacrificial system pointed to Christ.¹⁰⁶ Ellen White asserts that as “the foundation of the whole Jewish economy,”¹⁰⁷ Jesus came to earth “that he might meet humanity where it was, and show men what constituted true worship.”¹⁰⁸ “Jesus had come to teach the meaning of the worship of God.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305, Ellen White writes: “Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god.” *The Signs of the Times*, January 26, 1882.

¹⁰³ *The Signs of the Times*, May 8, 1893.

¹⁰⁴ *Manuscript* 132, 1902.

¹⁰⁵ *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 157.

¹⁰⁶ *Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1893. *The Signs of the Times*, July 29, 1886; *Special Testimonies on Education*. unpublished work, 173. See also *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:580; *The Review and Herald*, October 24, 1899.

¹⁰⁷ *Selected Messages*, 1:233.

¹⁰⁸ *The Signs of the Times*, September 16, 1897; See also *The Desire of Ages*, 157.

¹⁰⁹ *Desire of Ages*, 84.

5.3.2.1 *Christ and the Cross.*

The climax of Christ's earthly ministry was the cross, where he gave the clearest revelation of the Father's character. It is "in the light of the cross, [that] many who had never before known of the true God, [have begun] to comprehend the greatness of the Father's love."¹¹⁰ The relationship between salvation and worship is particularly focused in Ellen White's treatment of Christ's sacrifice. For her, the cross must be central to worship. "Where the people assemble to worship God let not a word be spoken that shall divert the mind from the great central interest—Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."¹¹¹ Calvary for Ellen White was not a historical accident, but the crowning demonstration of God's love for humanity:

We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified must be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should have special praise services for the purpose of keeping fresh in our thoughts everything that we receive from God, and of expressing our gratitude for His great love, and our willingness to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.¹¹²

Authentic worship cannot be separated from the cross. It is the cross that brings us into God's presence. Again, "we must gather about the cross. Christ and him crucified must be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should have special praise services for the purpose of keeping fresh in our thoughts everything that we receive from God, and of expressing our gratitude for his great love,

¹¹⁰ *Sons and Daughters of God*, 344.

¹¹¹ Ellen White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 331.

¹¹² *The Southern Watchman*, March 7, 1905; see also *The Signs of the Times*, May 8, 1893; *The Signs of the Times*, December 4, 1884; *Evangelism*, 502. On Ellen White's treatment of the cross and worship, see also *Manuscript Releases*, 18:80; *Manuscript Releases*, 18:112; *Manuscript 4*, 1893; *The Southern Watchman*, March 7, 1905; *Evangelism*, 350.

and our willingness to trust everything to the Hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”¹¹³

The cross is thus a symbol of salvation that needs to be celebrated in joyful worship.¹¹⁴

Christ does not only make the worship of the Father possible; He Himself is also worthy of worship. As “one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, and in purpose”¹¹⁵ and who gave His life that is “original, unborrowed, underived,”¹¹⁶ Christ also deserves our worship. Since the Father and the Son are united in the Godhead, they both deserve worship and praise.

Ellen White appeals to her fellow believers this way: “(A)s you meet from Sabbath to Sabbath, sing praises to Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. ‘Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood’ let the heart's adoration be given.”¹¹⁷

5.3.2.2 Christ our High Priest.

To understand Ellen White’s Christological focus on worship, it is also important to grasp her emphasis on Christ as “our Mediator and officiating High Priest in the presence of the Father.”¹¹⁸ It is because of His mediatorial function that Christ is also central to worship.¹¹⁹ As a matter of fact, worship is focused on Him because He brings us into the

¹¹³ *Southern Watchman*, March 7, 1905.

¹¹⁴ “Two Kinds of Service,” *Review and Herald*, March 25, 1909, Sermon preached February 6, in Oakland, California.

¹¹⁵ *The Great Controversy*, 437.

¹¹⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, 530.

¹¹⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:367.

¹¹⁸ *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1881), 4:395.

¹¹⁹ *The Signs of the Times*, July 4, 1892.

Father's presence: "Jesus became a man that He might mediate between man and God. He clothed His divinity with humanity, He associated with the human race, that with His long human arm He might encircle humanity, and with His divine arm grasp the throne of Divinity."¹²⁰ As our representative, He makes our worship acceptable.¹²¹

Through the life, death, resurrection and intercession of Christ, God leads us to the throne of mercy. This is why, the Gospel, or "the science of salvation," as Ellen White puts it, "is to be the burden of every sermon, the theme of every song."¹²² The priesthood of the risen Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is the key then, not only to our reconciliation with God but also to our worship. The church on earth becomes the gate to heaven only because Christ, our High Priest, ministers within the true tabernacle of which every house of worship is only a shadow.¹²³

Essentially, for Ellen White, Jesus is our all-sufficient Saviour and unique Mediator who enables us to approach the throne of grace in worship because of His reconciling ministry. Worship becomes possible only because of Jesus. Without Him, our worship would be idolatry because we would be worshipping a self-constructed image of God, something built outside of God's revelation of Himself in Christ.

¹²⁰ Letter 121, 1897, cited in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7A:487.

¹²¹ On Christ's mediatorial role, Ellen White's reflection is worth noting: "By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, the incense ascends to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression. To the true believer Christ is indeed the minister of the sanctuary, officiating for him in the sanctuary, and speaking through God's appointed agencies." *Manuscript* 142, 1899; *The Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1900; See also *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 353; *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:363; *Testimonies for the Church*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1904), 8:177; *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:395; *Manuscript* 28, 1901.

¹²² *Manuscript* 107, 1898.

¹²³ *The Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1900.

5.3.3 Worship in the Holy Spirit

The key notion that worship begins with God is not only found in the unique role of Christ. It is also found in the vital ministry of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the best way to begin reflecting on this subject is to consider Ellen White's comment on Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4), where she shares further insight into her understanding of worship. She writes:

Not by seeking a holy mountain or a sacred temple are men brought into communion with heaven. Religion is not to be confined to external forms and ceremonies. The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit every sincere prayer is indited, and such prayer is acceptable to God. Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit's working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them, and to make them His sons and daughters.¹²⁴

This understanding of worship contains at least three fundamental assertions:

1. Worship is a two-fold movement. It begins with God and goes back to God. It is God who takes the initiative of revealing Himself to us through His Holy Spirit and we respond to Him by the same Spirit. What motivates us to worship God is God's action towards us. Worship, as such, does not view God only as the Object of worship, but also as its Subject. It is He who enables our worship. True worship comes to us as a gift from God. As such, it is filled with promise because of the presence of the Holy Spirit.
2. Worship is spiritual. The most elaborate forms of worship cannot substitute for God's presence and action within the worshipping community. True worship can

¹²⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, 189. Ellen White shared the same idea in *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1909), 9:153-156.

only be done in the presence of God. Only then can the house of God become the gateway to heaven. In worship, we cannot come to God with our human works.

“True worship is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁵ Were it not for the Holy Spirit, there would be no worship. Fundamentally, we cannot worship God without His leading. Worship is the outworking of the Holy Spirit's working amongst God's people.

3. Worship is relational. It is not a cold transaction between a distant deity and his subjects. Rather it is a loving interaction between God and His children through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. God the Spirit is the one who presides over the gathered assembly. In worship, the church gathers in the presence and under the lordship of the Spirit, who draws the worshipping community into communion with God.

Hence for Ellen White, it is impossible to address the issue of corporate worship unless we factor in the role of the Holy Spirit. Any understanding of worship must be closely linked to the presence and activity of the Spirit within the worshipping community. In commenting on Solomon's dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, Ellen White argues that “the God of heaven is not, like the gods of the heathen, confined to temples made with hands; yet He would meet with His people by His Spirit when they should assemble at the house dedicated to His worship.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, 189.

¹²⁶ *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 48. Ellen White continues: “Although God dwells not in temples made with hands, yet He honours with His presence the assemblies of His people. He has promised that when they come together to seek Him, to acknowledge their sins, and to pray for one another, He will meet with them by His Spirit. But those who assemble to worship Him should put away every evil thing. Unless they worship Him in spirit and truth and in the beauty of holiness, their coming together will be of no avail. Of such the Lord declares, ‘This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.’ Matthew 15:8, 9. Those who

Elsewhere, Ellen White asserts that “the success of the meeting depends on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁷ The truth is that spiritual life comes from the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit does not manifest Himself, we can expect only lethargy at best and death at worst. This is why Ellen White insists that “the Sabbath meetings, the morning and evening worship in the home, the services held in the chapel—all should be vitalized by the Spirit of Christ.”¹²⁸

The work of the Spirit of God in worship is extremely important, according to Ellen White, and cannot be overlooked because of the nature of worship itself. Worship goes beyond the ritualistic and the ceremonial to firmly locate itself in the spiritual. She firmly believes that “everything pertaining to his worship is placed under the superintendence of his Holy Spirit.”¹²⁹

The Holy Spirit’s presence is a necessity because we cannot worship God without Him. God has to be present and active for us to worship Him. The best of our intentions and abilities as well as the highest heights of our religiosity are of no avail without God’s Spirit. “It is the Spirit of God that quickens the lifeless faculties of the soul to appreciate heavenly things, and attracts the affections toward God and the truth. Without the presence of Jesus in the heart, religious service is only dead, cold formalism.”¹³⁰ “A God

worship God must worship Him ‘in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.’ John 4:23.” *Prophets and Kings*, 50.

¹²⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:42.

¹²⁸ *Letter 260*, 1907.

¹²⁹ *The Review and Herald*, February 25, 1896.

¹³⁰ *The Review and Herald*, August 10, 1911.

of infinite holiness does not accept a spiritless offering. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth, or else their worship is valueless.”¹³¹

It is the Holy Spirit who initiates, activates and animates our worship. This kind of worship requires full surrender: “The religion of Christ means much more than forgiveness of sins. It means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God.”¹³² Clearly, there is a close link, according to Ellen White, between spiritual transformation, holy living and the divine service.¹³³ The work of the Spirit is not essentially to make the worshippers *do* but to make the worshippers *be*. The radical transformation that the Spirit brings is what makes true worship a reality. The crucial role of the Holy Spirit in corporate worship must be closely linked to His presence and activity in the life of worshippers.

Up to this point in our analysis of an Adventist understanding of worship through the writings of Ellen White, we have focused on worship as beginning with God, that is, having its source, foundation and *raison d'être* in God. It is now necessary to analyse more closely Ellen White’s understanding of the church at worship.

5.4 THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP

In this section dealing with Ellen White’s understanding of worship, I want to analyze how she views the congregation’s response in worship. My aim is to explore her view of the church as the assembly of the faithful who worship God in the company of angels. The church does this with reverence and praise through four main elements of corporate worship—music, prayer, preaching, and giving. I have left out the Lord’s

¹³¹ *The Review and Herald*, May 18, 1897.

¹³² *Manuscript Releases*, 4:337.

¹³³ *The Review and Herald*, November 29, 1892.

Supper because it is celebrated on a quarterly basis in Adventist worship. Again, I have also discussed it in Chapter Three.

5.4.1 The Church

We have noted earlier that the coming together of God's people in worship begins with God. The initiative belongs entirely to Him. It is He who invites; it is He who provides access to Himself; it is He who empowers us so that we can glorify Him. On its own, humanity cannot approach God or worship Him in spirit and in truth. God can be truly worshipped only if He is the Initiator, the Mediator and the One who empowers. As such, He is both the Subject and the Object of worship. Viewed from this perspective, worship affirms a crucial understanding of the church as the people whom God has called for His glory. Ellen White expresses it this way:

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organised for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God.¹³⁴

Accordingly, the church is the community composed of the faithful who have been called out of the world into a new and living relationship with God. Ellen White describes the church thus,

God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Where Christ is, even among the

¹³⁴ *The Acts of the Apostles*, 9.

humble few, this is Christ's church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church.¹³⁵

The presence of Christ among His saved people creates the church. In the hour of worship, the *ekklesia* is a true manifestation of the church on earth. It is the gathering of God's people, the recipients of God's actions in history, now inhabited by Christ's presence. When the church gathers, she does so in the presence of God in the name of Christ.¹³⁶ The house of God itself is a "place marked by God's special presence,"¹³⁷ "a sacred spot,"¹³⁸ "the audience chamber of the Most-High."¹³⁹ It is the place where the church can have an engagement with God in worship that is active and participative. This communion with Christ transcends time and space and involves communion with the whole of heaven.

5.4.2 Angels

Regarding the role of angels in corporate worship, Ellen White posits that,

From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived . . . God brought these witnesses into covenant relation with Himself, uniting the church on earth with the church in heaven. He has sent forth His angels to minister to His church, and the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against His people.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ *Manuscript Releases*, 17:81. Elsewhere she writes: "The church on earth, composed of those who are faithful and loyal to God, is the "true tabernacle," whereof the Redeemer is the minister. God, and not man, pitched this tabernacle on a high, elevated platform. This tabernacle is Christ's body, and from north, south, east, and west, He gathers those who shall help to compose it." *The Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1900.

¹³⁶ *Sons and Daughters of God*, 122.

¹³⁷ Ellen White, *God's Amazing Grace* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1973), 93.

¹³⁸ *Manuscript* 23, 1886.15; see also *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:493-497.

¹³⁹ *The Health Reformer*, February 1, 1872.

¹⁴⁰ *The Acts of the Apostles*, 11.

The above description conveys the idea that the church is an ever-existing community of all those who belong to God. It includes earthly and heavenly beings that are integrally connected because of their relationship to God. The starting point of the church is “from the beginning” and goes into including the righteous of “every age,” brought into a covenanted relationship with the Lord. Although earthly dwellers and celestial beings belong to two distinct categories, they constitute one communion of saints belonging to one Lord.¹⁴¹ “The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church.”¹⁴²

This understanding has profound implications for worship according to Ellen White. The worship offered by the church on earth is closely linked to the worship that is offered in heaven. Commenting on the dedication of the temple of Solomon, she affirms:

The house of God may be very humble in comparison with the temple of Solomon, but it is no less acknowledged by God. To those who worship there it is the gate of heaven, if they worship God in spirit and in truth, and in the beauty of holiness. As songs of praise are sung, as earnest, fervent prayers arise to heaven, as lessons are repeated of the wondrous works of God, as the heart's gratitude is expressed in prayer and song, angels from heaven take up the strain and unite in praise and thanksgiving to God.¹⁴³

Ellen White considers worship to be communication, participation, dialogue between heaven and earth that has God as its centre. The church worships in the presence

¹⁴¹ *Letter 55*, April 3, 1888.

¹⁴² *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:366. To my knowledge, this dimension of ecclesiology has not been explored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For more reference in Ellen White's writings on the relationship between the militant church here on earth and the triumphant church in heaven, see *The Ellen White 1888 Materials*, 27; *Letter 37*, 1887; *The Youth's Instructor*, October 8, 1896; *Manuscript 153*, April, 1901; *Letter 15*, April 4, 1894; *Manuscript 141*, June 19, 1907; *The Review and Herald*, June 11, 1895; *Australasian Union Conference Record* October 7, 1907; *Letter 75*, December 9, 1890; *God's Amazing Grace*, 95; *The Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1900.

¹⁴³ *Christ Triumphant* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 244; see also *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1967), 288.

of holy angels. “They assemble in his house, which is as the audience chamber of the Most High, where heavenly angels are in attendance.”¹⁴⁴ Unseen to human eyes, angels nevertheless are around us¹⁴⁵ being “brought very near”¹⁴⁶ as attentive listeners,¹⁴⁷ keen observers,¹⁴⁸ interested and active participants,¹⁴⁹ co-operating,¹⁵⁰ singing,¹⁵¹ supplementing our praises¹⁵² as the church engages in common worship.¹⁵³

The church on earth and the church in heaven are understood as possessing an organic unity. Worship on earth echoes into the worship of heaven and vice versa. Worshippers are encouraged to see themselves as active participants in a worship experience that transcends the confine of their local assembly. As they worship God in spirit and in truth, they stand at the gate of heaven, on holy ground, catching a glimpse by faith of the worship that continually takes place before God’s throne. The worship offered here on earth is then echoed in heaven as Ellen White explains this using sanctuary imagery:

¹⁴⁴ *The Review and Herald*, January 30, 1900, Art. B, par. 1

¹⁴⁵ *Counsels to the Church*, 252.

¹⁴⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:362.

¹⁴⁷ *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C., Review and Herald, 1900), 176; *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1915), 171.

¹⁴⁸ *Counsels to the Church*, 250.

¹⁴⁹ *God’s Amazing Grace*, 75.

¹⁵⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:362.

¹⁵¹ *Letter 190*, 1902; *Evangelism*, 509.

¹⁵² *God’s Amazing Grace*, 75.

¹⁵³ *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894), 131; *The EGW 1888 Materials*, 1716.

In the inner court of heaven, they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God . . . Oh, that we could all realise the nearness of heaven to earth! . . . In every assembly of the saints below are angels of God, listening to the testimonies, songs, and prayers. Let us remember that our praises are supplemented by the choirs of the angelic host above.¹⁵⁴

To grasp such a view of worship is to understand that the veil has been removed and that we now have free access to the heavenly places. Hence, Ellen White admonishes: “We must carry to every religious gathering a quickened spiritual consciousness that God and His angels are there, co-operating with all true worshipers.”¹⁵⁵

This notion of God and angels being participants in our worship has profound implications. The essence of angelic activities in worship points again that worship is bound to be relational. Houses of worship are *Peniels*, places where people can embrace the face-to-face reality of God’s presence. “Our meetings,” declares Ellen White, “should be pervaded with the very atmosphere of heaven.”¹⁵⁶

At the heart of worship is God himself who wants us to engage with him, and angels are there to complement us in that process. God’s presence amongst his people is what makes worship possible. Consequently, linking the notion of *divine participation* to worship on earth brings us back to the original meaning of corporate worship, which, as the term denotes, is by nature communal, not individualistic. True worship is a dialogue and a communion along vertical and horizontal axes as it unites us both with God and with one another.

¹⁵⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:366.

¹⁵⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:362.

¹⁵⁶ *Review and Herald*, November 30, 1886.

How does the church respond to God's participation in its corporate worship? For Ellen White, the basic way to respond to God's activity and continued presence is through reverence and praise.

5.4.3 Reverence

Because of her lofty concept of God, Ellen White believes that the fundamental way to respond to the Lord is reverence.¹⁵⁷ For Ellen White, "we are to approach God's throne with reverential awe,¹⁵⁸ recognizing that it is by grace that we are allowed to enter into His awesome presence. To Ellen White, showing reverence for God does not mean engaging in complex liturgies.¹⁵⁹ Rather, it is the fruit of faith and the outworking of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁰ Reverence should emphasize simplicity.

Echoing the Puritans, Ellen White believes that "outward splendor, pomp, and ceremony" are in no way the proof of genuine reverence for God.¹⁶¹ These can be misleading and can in fact be an indication of an impoverished spirituality for "when a church depends on parade, ceremonies, and display, be sure that inward holiness is wanting. To make up for the absence of the Spirit of God, to conceal spiritual poverty and

¹⁵⁷ Ellen White makes the connection between reverence and Sabbath as follows: "Had the Sabbath always been kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to his Maker as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel." *The Story of Redemption*, 382.

¹⁵⁸ *Letter* 1100, 1896.

¹⁵⁹ *The Great Controversy*, 566-567; *The Desire of Ages*, 278-280.

¹⁶⁰ *The Signs of the Times*, February 24, 1890.

¹⁶¹ *The Great Controversy*, 566.

apostasy, the outside is made attractive.”¹⁶² “In the light shining from the cross,” Ellen White affirms, “true Christianity appears so pure and lovely that no external decorations can enhance its true worth. It is the beauty of holiness, a meek and quiet spirit, which is of value with God.”¹⁶³ Since reverence is the product of faith and of the Holy Spirit, it cannot be humanly manufactured. Reverence is a “precious grace that should be cherished.”¹⁶⁴ As such, it cannot be confined to congregational worship only. It embraces the whole of life.¹⁶⁵

Ellen White understands reverence to be “godly fear.”¹⁶⁶ It is “the fear of the Lord.”¹⁶⁷ “True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence.”¹⁶⁸ Reverence hence emphasises a dual sense of God’s transcendence and immanence. The practice of worship is done with this dual concept in mind, instilling in the worshipper a profound sense of humility. “God is greatly to be revered; all who truly realise His presence will bow in humility before Him.”¹⁶⁹ Ellen White puts it this way: “Closely connected with this reverence will be deep self-abasement. We may always observe this, when God’s servants have had near approaches

¹⁶² *Letter 90*, 1897, 5-8, “To Brother and Sister Lindsay,” August 18, 1897; *Manuscript Releases*, 12:220.

¹⁶³ *The Great Controversy*, 88, 566.

¹⁶⁴ *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903); 242; See also *Prophets and Kings*, 236.

¹⁶⁵ *Letter 14*, 1900.

¹⁶⁶ *Christ Triumphant*, 331.

¹⁶⁷ *Christian Education*, 39.

¹⁶⁸ *Prophets and Kings*, 48-49.

¹⁶⁹ *God’s Amazing Grace*, 92.

to him, or a true view of his glory, they have been greatly humbled in the sense of their own sinfulness.”¹⁷⁰ Only an understanding of God’s exalted character can produce such a response. True worship should therefore be characterized by reverence and humility. We are to approach our Maker “with humility and awe, through faith in a divine Mediator . . . as a subject of grace, a suppliant at the footstool of mercy.”¹⁷¹ “In the name of Jesus we may come before Him with confidence, but we must not approach Him with the boldness of presumption.”¹⁷²

Yet, Ellen White finds herself frequently writing about irreverence because of its prevalence in Adventist houses of worship.¹⁷³ Elsewhere, Ellen White observes, “reverence for the house of God has become almost extinct. Sacred things and places are not discerned; the holy and exalted are not appreciated.”¹⁷⁴ “There is a growing lack of reverence for our maker, a growing disregard of His greatness and His majesty.”¹⁷⁵ The constant lack of reverence had made Adventist congregations social clubs rather than houses of worship. Ellen White painfully witnesses children running about the house of God, playing, talking, manifesting their evil tempers, being light and trifling, whispering and laughing, being careless¹⁷⁶ and young people as well as adults being indifferent,

¹⁷⁰ *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 22, 1858, 77.

¹⁷¹ *God’s Amazing Grace*, 91.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁷³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:491.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 495.

¹⁷⁵ *Manuscript 84b*, 1897 quoted in *Selected Messages*, 2:312.

¹⁷⁶ *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1889), 5:496-497; *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1930), 265.

inattentive,¹⁷⁷ communicating with one another during the sermon,¹⁷⁸ reading the newspapers,¹⁷⁹ noisily walking out,¹⁸⁰ wearing inappropriate clothing and behaving coarsely in the house of God.¹⁸¹ She traces irreverence back to the failure of parents in raising the level of spirituality at home, and the failure of ministers in offering proper education in the church.¹⁸²

The situation was so prevalent in Ellen White's time of ministry that she was adamant that "nearly all need to be taught how to conduct themselves in the house of God."¹⁸³ To correct that trend was a matter of greatest importance and utmost urgency. For Ellen White, the stakes are high because she believed the lack of godly fear "is enough to bring God's displeasure and shut His presence from our assemblies."¹⁸⁴ Hence, she admonishes: "Christ's followers today should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear."¹⁸⁵ "The house erected for the worship of God should be cherished with sacred reverence."¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁷ *Messages to Young People*, 266.

¹⁷⁸ *Messages to Young People*, 266.

¹⁷⁹ *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, October 30, 1889, 116.

¹⁸⁰ *The Review and Herald*, April 14, 1885, par. 8.

¹⁸¹ *The Health Reformer*, February 1, 1872, par. 7; *Review and Herald* May 30, 1871.

¹⁸² *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:496-497.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 496.

¹⁸⁴ *The Review and Herald*, September 19, 1854; *Child Guidance* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1954), 540.

¹⁸⁵ *Prophets and Kings*, 48.

¹⁸⁶ *Manuscript 23*, 1886.

Yet, reverence can sometimes be manifested in different ways. How should one show reverence in worship? For Ellen White, reverence cannot be a simulated posture. Reverence for God is an inner disposition, which then is manifested “in attitude and demeanor.”¹⁸⁷ The spirit of reverence is manifested in worship in various ways such as honouring God’s holy day,¹⁸⁸ bowing or kneeling before God during prayer,¹⁸⁹ refraining from using the name of God lightly or thoughtlessly,¹⁹⁰ revering the “sacred name of Christ,”¹⁹¹ handling God’s Word most respectfully and preaching it accurately,¹⁹² solemnly administering the ordinances,¹⁹³ respecting the hour and time of worship,¹⁹⁴ and “having the highest reverence for the house of God.”¹⁹⁵

Ellen White envisions corporate worship as a sacred sphere of embodied piety. She broadly articulates her view of reverence in the house of God on His holy day sequentially in the following way:

¹⁸⁷ *God’s Amazing Grace*, 93; see also *The Youth Instructor*, July 12, 1904; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:491.

¹⁸⁸ *Child Guidance*, 527.

¹⁸⁹ *Selected Messages*, 2:312.

¹⁹⁰ *Education*, 243.

¹⁹¹ *The Signs of the Times*, February 24, 1890.

¹⁹² *Education*, 244. See also *The Review and Herald*, May 10, 1898.

¹⁹³ *Evangelism*, 314.

¹⁹⁴ *Education*, 242-243.

¹⁹⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:494; *Manuscript 34*, 1889.

5.4.3.1 Before the Service.

Worshippers are to enter the place of worship with awe and reverence, having their hearts fixed upon God.”¹⁹⁶ “[T]hey should do so with decorum, passing quietly to their seats . . . Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshipers.”¹⁹⁷ “[T]hey should leave behind all common worldly thoughts . . . pride and passion, dissension and self-esteem, selfishness, and covetousness, which God pronounces idolatry.”¹⁹⁸ “If some have to wait a few minutes before the meeting begins, they should maintain a true spirit of devotion by silent meditation, keeping the heart uplifted to God in prayer that the service may be of special benefit to their own hearts and lead to the conviction and conversion of other souls.”¹⁹⁹ “If when the people come into the house of worship, they have genuine reverence for the Lord and bear in mind that they are in His presence, there will be a sweet eloquence in silence.”²⁰⁰

Worshippers are to come into God’s presence with pure thoughts and holy motives because He is present in His house. On how the worshipper should approach God’s house, Ellen White writes:

God is here; this is His house. I must have pure thoughts and the holiest motives. I must have no pride, envy, jealousy, evil surmising, hatred, or deception in my heart; for I am coming into the presence of the holy God. This is the place where God meets with and blesses His people. The high and holy One who inhabiteth

¹⁹⁶ *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 13, 1864, 18.

¹⁹⁷ *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952), 286.

¹⁹⁸ *Manuscript 23*, 1886; see also *Manuscript Release*, 3:234.

¹⁹⁹ *My Life Today*, 286.

²⁰⁰ *Testimony Treasures* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1949), 2:194.

eternity looks upon me, searches my heart, and reads the most secret thoughts and acts of my life.²⁰¹

5.4.3.2 During the Service.

“When the minister enters, it should be with dignified, solemn mien. He should bow down in silent prayer as soon as he steps into the pulpit, and earnestly ask help of God . . . Every one of the congregation, also, who fears God should with bowed head unite in silent prayer with him that God may grace the meeting with His presence and give power to His truth proclaimed from human lips.”²⁰² “When the meeting is opened by prayer, every knee should bow in the presence of the Holy One, and every heart should ascend to God in silent devotion . . . All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master of assemblies.”²⁰³ “Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness and indifference. When the word of life is spoken, you should remember that you are listening to the voice of God through His delegated servant.”²⁰⁴

5.4.3.3 After the Service.

When the benediction is pronounced, all should still be quiet, as if fearful of losing the peace of Christ. Let all pass out without jostling or loud talking, feeling that they are in the presence of God, that His eye is resting upon them, and that they must act as in His visible presence. Let there be no stopping in the aisles to visit or gossip, thus blocking them up so that others cannot pass out. The precincts of the church should be invested with a sacred reverence.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:494.

²⁰² *Testimony Treasures*, 2:195.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Messages to Young People*, 266.

²⁰⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:493-494.

What seems to be emerging in Ellen White writings (contrary to early Sabbatarian Adventism) is the emergence of an understanding of corporate worship as a coordinated social action. In public worship, as Reformed theologian, Gerrit Immink, puts it: “[t]he collective character does not emerge spontaneously, but is coordinated. The liturgy follows a script, a liturgical agenda.”²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, worship, for Ellen White, is still essentially a matter of the heart. It is inwardly defined through our spiritual connection with God. In worship, we acknowledge God’s infinite greatness and yet total approachability. The emphasis on divine transcendence leads to an equal emphasis on God’s immanence. This leads to a worship experience that is characterized by a sense of reverence and simple dignity.

Yet, the picture is not complete. A worship that emphasises only reverential awe would fail to maintain liturgical integrity. Another element needs to be present: praise. “There would be an attendance in the sanctuary where God meets with His people, a reverence for all the ordinances of His worship, and grateful praise and thanksgiving would be offered for all the gifts of His providence.”²⁰⁷ This leads us to our next section: worshipping God with grateful praise and thanksgiving.

5.4.4 Praise

As much as Ellen White links worship with reverence, she also connects the praise of God with joy and thanksgiving.²⁰⁸ “To praise God in fullness and sincerity of heart is

²⁰⁶ Gerrit Immink, *The Touch of the Sacred: The Practice, Theology, and Tradition of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), viii.

²⁰⁷ *Manuscript 67*, 1907.

²⁰⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:315-319.

as much a duty as is prayer.”²⁰⁹ Being reverent in worship does not mean being miserable. Worship is about celebration and rejoicing. Worship should not be considered drudgery²¹⁰ or “a heart-saddening, distressing exercise.”²¹¹ Rather, it should be a pleasure.²¹² Praise is the expression of a loving relationship with God and orients the worshipper towards heaven. It is the antithesis of indifference.²¹³

Although reverence and joy may at first glance appear contradictory, authentic worship keeps them both in balance. Ellen White occasionally synthesises both terms by using the term “reverent joy”²¹⁴ when describing the right way God’s people should come into God’s presence. Joyful praise, in her understanding, should not be confused with bustle and excitement,²¹⁵ fanaticism²¹⁶ or casualness.²¹⁷ In their joyful celebration, worshippers should never forget that they are still in the presence of a holy God.²¹⁸ Hence, she exhorts: “Do not allow levity to come into your experience, but cultivate

²⁰⁹ *Christ Object Lessons*, 299.

²¹⁰ *In Heavenly Places*, 152.

²¹¹ *Steps to Christ*, 104.

²¹² *That I May Know Him*, 263.

²¹³ Ellen White writes: “God calls upon His people to arise and come out of the chilling, frosty atmosphere in which they have been living, to shake off the impressions and ideas that have frozen up the impulses of love and held them in selfish inactivity. He bids them come up from their low, earthly level and breathe in the clear, sunny atmosphere of heaven” *Testimonies*, 5:607.

²¹⁴ *The Signs of the Times*, 26, 1882; *The Review and Herald*, May 30, 1882; *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 164; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 707; *Steps to Christ*, 104.

²¹⁵ *The Review and Herald*, May 30, 1882.

²¹⁶ *Selected Messages*, 2:105-106.

²¹⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:491.

²¹⁸ *Counsels for the Church*, 164.

cheerfulness; for this is an excellent grace. We cannot afford to be unmindful of our words and deportment.”²¹⁹

Ellen White holds that “much of the public worship of God consists of praise and prayer”²²⁰ and that “worship should be so filled with praise and thanksgiving.”²²¹ She admonishes Adventist believers to “let the praise of God be in [their] heart and soul and voice”²²² and on their lips.²²³

To praise God is to express our gratitude to God for the blessings that are received from Him. “The hour which we meet for Sabbath worship should be a time when the tongue can testify of the grace and love of God.”²²⁴ To praise is also to acknowledge God’s generosity. The God who creates is the One who gives in abundance. “We are grateful for the mercies and favors bestowed on us, and that the whole soul is awakened to a realization of God's glory.”²²⁵ Consequently, the praise of God is not an option for the worshipper. “To praise God in fullness and sincerity of heart is as much a duty as is prayer.”²²⁶ It is “our whole duty to our God in the line of raising joyful thanksgiving and

²¹⁹ *Letter* 260, 1907.

²²⁰ *The Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1886; *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 177.

²²¹ *Letter* 279, 1905, 2, 3. (To Clarence Santee, October 4, 1905.) *Manuscript Releases*, 9:97.

²²² *Manuscript* 37, 1894.

²²³ *Manuscript Releases*, 11:269.

²²⁴ *Manuscript*, 175, 1907.

²²⁵ *The Review and Herald*, November 20, 1900.

²²⁶ *Christ's Object Lessons*, 299, 300.

praise for his constant care and love.”²²⁷ But more than a duty, the praise of God is also a privilege. Being created, redeemed and sanctified for God’s glory, “it is our privilege to be joyful in the Lord.”²²⁸

It is God’s desire that worshippers be filled with praise to His name.²²⁹ He is honoured by the expression of praise and thanksgiving.²³⁰ Being acutely aware of God’s generosity toward the human race in general and the church in particular, Ellen White expresses surprise at “how sparing we are at giving thanks . . . and how little gratitude we express, how little we praise Him for what He has done for us.”²³¹

A major theme found in Ellen White’s writings is that of God as the source of true joy.²³² Holy exultation is a gift from above, not something that is humanly manufactured. It cannot be the result of splendid ceremonial. Our joy is in the Lord. It is rooted in God’s love and in His redemptive action towards us. Those who experience the love of God and

²²⁷ *The Signs of the Times*, September 22, 1890.

²²⁸ *Manuscript*, 102, September 21, 1901.

²²⁹ *General Conference Bulletin*, April 23, 1901; *Manuscript* 108, 1904; *The Signs of the Times*, August 11, 1909;

²³⁰ *Christ's Object Lessons*, 298, 299. Hence, she notes: “God desires His obedient children to claim His blessing and to come before Him with praise and thanksgiving. God is the Fountain of life and power . . . He has done for His chosen people that which should inspire every heart with thanksgiving, and it grieves Him that so little praise is offered. He desires to have a stronger expression from His people, showing that they know they have reason for joy and gladness.” *God's Amazing Grace*, 75.

²³¹ Again, just like in the case of irreverence, the lack of joyful praise and thanksgiving in common worship is the direct consequence of a defective personal and family spirituality. See *Steps to Christ*, 102; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:493; *The Review and Herald*, Jan 1, 1880; *Manuscript Releases*, 14:106. *The Review and Herald*, January 27, 1903; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:318.

²³² In *Christ Object Lessons*, 298, Ellen White writes “A congregation may be the poorest in the land. It may be without the attraction of any outward show; but if the members possess the principles of the character of Christ, they will have His joy in their souls. Angels will unite with them in their worship. The praise and thanksgiving from grateful hearts will ascend to God as a sweet oblation.”

His salvation respond to Him with gladness as they daily live out their faith.²³³ The praise of God is Christocentric because Jesus is the reason for our worship. Addressing the staff and pensioners at the Loma Linda Sanitarium, Ellen White writes:

The Sabbath meetings, the morning and evening worship in the home, the services held in the chapel—all should be vitalized by the Spirit of Christ. Each member of the sanitarium family should confess Christ openly and with gladness, expressing the joy and comfort and hope that are written in the soul. Christ is to be set forth as the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. He is to be set forth as the Giver of every good and perfect gift, the One in whom our hopes of eternal life are centred. If we would do this, all narrowness must be set aside, and we must call into exercise the love of Christ. The joy we experience in this love will be a blessing to others. I am bidden to say to the sanitarium family, Let your social meetings, and all your religious exercises, be characterized by a deep earnestness and a joy that expresses the love of God in the soul.²³⁴

Ellen White places considerable emphasis on the cross in relationship to praise and thanksgiving.²³⁵ For her, the experience of joy in worship is always connected to our remembering of the life and death of Jesus Christ. “The thought that Christ died to obtain for us the gift of everlasting life is enough to call forth from our hearts the most sincere and fervent gratitude, and from our lips the most enthusiastic praise.”²³⁶ The cross is to be the source and centre of our joyful praise and thanksgiving.

The implication of this emphasis for worship is clear; our joy and thanksgiving are our response to God’s self-revelation in the crucified Christ. Our encounter with the crucified and living Christ is transformative. To know God through the cross is to be changed by the God of the cross. This leads to joyful praise and thanksgiving, as believers

²³³ *Steps to Christ*, 104; See also *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:365-367.

²³⁴ *Letter*, 260, 1907.

²³⁵ *The Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1893; *Sons and Daughters*, 344; *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 28, 1893; *The Review and Herald*, November 20, 1913; *The Signs of the Times*, December 4, 1884.

²³⁶ *The Signs of the Times*, March 10, 1887.

are caught up in recounting God's love for them. The cross is the basis of our joyful celebration of God's love.²³⁷ There is no celebration without Calvary, no praise without Golgotha, no thanksgiving without the blood Christ shed on the cross. Worship is the rehearsal and celebration of our release from captivity and of our reconciliation to God.²³⁸

To praise God is to draw near heaven's worship. "And as we thus express our gratitude, we are approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts."²³⁹ To praise God is also the best way to defeat the Enemy. "As lessons of the wondrous works of God are repeated, and as the heart's gratitude is expressed in prayer and song, angels from heaven take up the strain, and unite in praise and thanksgiving to God. These exercises drive back the power of Satan. They expel murmurings and complainings [sic], and Satan loses ground."²⁴⁰ As we worship God with joy and thanksgiving, we affirm that the Christ who has brought us salvation is intimately involved in our present history.

5.5 ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

An examination of Adventist worship practice reveals much about Adventist theology. The worship practices of those in the Adventist tradition, like those in any tradition, contain within them many of the root convictions of what it means to be Christian and leads us into the business of 'thinking of God'. The purpose of this section is to consider Ellen White's understanding of the four main elements of Adventist weekly worship, namely: music, the sermon, public prayer, and the offertory.

²³⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:317.

²³⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:244; *Letter* 260, 1907.

²³⁹ *The Signs of the Times*; January 26, 1882; see also *Steps to Christ*, 103-104.

²⁴⁰ *The Review and Herald*, October 24, 1899.

5.5.1 Music

Ellen White considers music to be a precious heavenly gift to humanity to awaken in the soul devotion and gratitude to God.”²⁴¹ Through music, reminders of God’s power and grace, affirmations of faith, expressions of praise and thanksgiving become imbedded in our very being, so that these words and feelings become part of who we are.²⁴²

Music is an integral part of the worship service. “Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer.”²⁴³ Through music, the worshipper enters in the very atmosphere of heaven. “The melody of praise is the atmosphere of heaven when heaven comes in touch with the earth, there is music and song.”²⁴⁴ Because of its sacred character, singing should not be done haphazardly. We are to offer our best to God.

5.5.1.1 *The Kind of Music in Worship.*

Ellen White sometimes found it painful worshipping amongst Adventists. She deplored “the loud singing . . . with harshness and shrillness that offend the ear.”²⁴⁵ She was often “pained to hear untrained voices, pitched to the highest key, literally shrieking the sacred words of some hymn of praise” to such a point that she would “rejoice when the painful exercise [was] ended.”²⁴⁶ She complained that “some think that the louder

²⁴¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 594; *Manuscript 5*, 1874; *Education*, 162, 167; *Evangelism*, 498; *Letter 5*, 1850; *Letter 53*, 1896.

²⁴² *Evangelism*, 496, 499, 504; *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 254; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:493.

²⁴³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 594; see also *Education*, 168.

²⁴⁴ *Education*, 161.

²⁴⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:143-144.

²⁴⁶ *Evangelism*, 507-508.

they sing the more music they make,” oblivious to the fact that “noise is not music.”²⁴⁷

Some impatient singers refused choir discipline and wanted “to do things after their own style.”²⁴⁸ Overzealous musicians would sometimes make a bedlam of noise to such a point it shocked and confused the senses of the worshippers.²⁴⁹ Worse yet, others added gesticulations to prove their spirituality.²⁵⁰

5.5.1.2 *Quality of Music*

Ellen White has some definite ideas on the qualities of the performance of music that was part of the worship of God. According to her, music in worship should possess three qualities: “beauty, pathos, and power.”²⁵¹ She believes that “we should endeavor in our songs of praise to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs.”²⁵² The nearer the people of God can approximate harmonious heavenly singing, the more is God glorified, the church benefited, and unbelievers favourably affected.²⁵³

What is her picture of angelic singing? She describes the singing of angels as being “soft and melodious”²⁵⁴ pouring out of perfect love, “the keynote of which is

²⁴⁷ *Evangelism*, 510.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 505.

²⁴⁹ *Selected Messages*, 2:37-38.

²⁵⁰ *Manuscript Releases*, 5:196.

²⁵¹ *Evangelism*, 505.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 507; *The Signs of the Times*, March 14, 1900.

²⁵³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:146.

²⁵⁴ Ellen White, *The Voice in Speech and Song* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 423; See also *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:146. *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:266.

thanksgiving.”²⁵⁵ Since the church on earth is to pattern its singing after the church in heaven, Ellen White believes that the congregation should sing with the voice modulated, softened, and subdued,²⁵⁶ poured forth “in clear, distinct utterance”²⁵⁷ with the right “intonation, correct pronunciation . . . so that God's praise can be sung in clear, soft tones, not with harshness and shrillness that offend the ear.”²⁵⁸ Singing must be with pathos and be led by the Spirit,²⁵⁹ “in a natural tone.”²⁶⁰

5.5.1.3 Use of Instruments.

Ellen White advocated the use of instruments in church worship. She explicitly stated, “we are not to oppose the use of instrumental music in our work. This part of the service is to be carefully conducted; for it is the praise of God in song.” “Call to your aid, if practicable, instrumental music, and let the glorious harmony ascend to God, an acceptable offering.”²⁶¹ In supporting the use of instruments, Ellen White often referred to the practice in Bible times: “Let the talent of singing be brought into the work. The use of musical instruments is not at all objectionable. These were used in religious services in ancient times. The worshippers praised God upon the harp and cymbal, and music should have its place in our services. It will add to the interest.” In one of her talks at the 1905

²⁵⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:244.

²⁵⁶ *Evangelism*, 508.

²⁵⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:493.

²⁵⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:143-144; see also *The Review and Herald*, August 27, 1903.

²⁵⁹ *Manuscript 5*, 1874.

²⁶⁰ *Evangelism*, 510.

²⁶¹ *The Voice in Speech and Song*, 415.

General Conference session of Seventh-day Adventists, she remarked approvingly of musical instruments thus: “I am glad to hear the musical instruments that you have here. God wants us to have them. He wants us to praise Him with heart and soul and voice, magnifying His name before the world.”²⁶² While approving of instrumental music in church, she cautions that “musical instruments [be] skillfully handled.”²⁶³

5.5.1.4 Singing with Understanding

Although Ellen White was in full support of skilled vocalists and instrumentalists, she also believed sacred music was not simply a matter of displaying right technique; it was most of all a matter of right disposition. She was acutely aware that, like any gift, musical skills could be used for self-glorification. “Musical talent too often fosters pride and ambition for display, and singers have but little thought of the worship of God.”²⁶⁴ She was pained when singers and musicians exhibited their talents rather than lifting Christ. To her, that proved they were singing more for human beings than for God.²⁶⁵ She cautioned: “Display is not religion nor sanctification. There is nothing more offensive in God's sight than a display of instrumental music when those taking part are not consecrated, are not making melody in their hearts to the Lord.”²⁶⁶ Beauty in music is not everything.²⁶⁷

²⁶² *The Review and Herald*, June 15, 1905.

²⁶³ *Gospel Workers*, 357.

²⁶⁴ *Letter* 6a, 1890.

²⁶⁵ *The Voice in Speech and Song*, 423-425

²⁶⁶ *The Review and Herald*, November 14, 1899; *Evangelism*, 510.

²⁶⁷ *Evangelism*, 508. *Voice in Speech and Song*, 433.3; see also *Evangelism*, 511; *Gospel Workers*, 357; *The Review and Herald*, July 24, 1883.

Ellen White often uses the expression “singing with the spirit and the understanding”²⁶⁸ to underscore the importance of spiritual singing.²⁶⁹ For music to be acceptable to God, it needs to come from a sanctified heart. “God is glorified by songs of praise from a pure heart filled with love and devotion to Him.”²⁷⁰ “The heart service is what God requires; the forms and lip service are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.”²⁷¹ Corporate worship is spiritual and God-centred; it is not a theatrical performance for a human audience. This explains why Ellen White opposes the use of paid professional choirs in worship services:

How can those who have no interest in the word of God, who have never read His word with a sincere desire to understand its truths, be expected to sing with the spirit and the understanding? How can their hearts be in harmony with the words of sacred song? How can the heavenly choir join in music that is only a form?²⁷²

In contrast, she holds the view that “the singing of simple hymns by the congregation has a charm that is not possessed by the singing of a choir, however skilled it may be.”²⁷³

Ellen White’s reflections indicate that congregational worship should be participative and that the singing should not be a show for passive listeners. “There should be in the meetings nothing of a theatrical nature. The singing should not be done

²⁶⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:146; *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:143; *The Review and Herald*, September 27, 1892; *Manuscript* 91, 1903; *Gospel Workers*, 357; *Letter 1a*. 1890.

²⁶⁹ *The Voice in Speech and Song*, p.425; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, 143-144.

²⁷⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:509. See also *The Review and Herald*, November 14, 1899; *Evangelism*, 510.

²⁷¹ *Evangelism*, 507; see also *Letter* 198, 1899; *Evangelism*, 512; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 594.

²⁷² *Gospel Workers*, 357.

²⁷³ *Evangelism*, 509.

by a few only. All present should be encouraged to join in the song service.”²⁷⁴ This could be attained by the appropriate selection of familiar hymns.²⁷⁵ She also believes that a “company of the best singers whose voices can lead” should lead the whole congregation in offering praise to God.²⁷⁶

Repeatedly, Ellen White urges her fellow believers to sing with cheerfulness. She insists that the singing of dolorous notes of funeral hymns has no place in regular worship.²⁷⁷ “That which is done for the glory of God should be done with cheerfulness, with songs of praise and thanksgiving, not with sadness and gloom.”²⁷⁸ And yet again, Ellen White maintains that worship music should be done with order²⁷⁹ and solemnity.²⁸⁰

5.5.2 Public Prayer

Ellen White once remarked that “It is impossible for the soul to flourish while prayer is not a special exercise of the mind.”²⁸¹ The same principle applies to the life of the congregation. Public prayer shapes the spirituality of the church and is therefore a crucial element of any worship service. Although Ellen White writes more extensively on private and family prayer than public prayer, her thoughts on prayer, in the context of

²⁷⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:115-6; *Letter 157*, 1902. (*Evangelism*, 507).

²⁷⁵ *The Review and Herald*, July 24, 1883.

²⁷⁶ *The Review and Herald*, July 24, 1883.

²⁷⁷ *Evangelism*, 180.

²⁷⁸ *Steps to Christ*, 103; See also *Evangelism*, 508.

²⁷⁹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:71.

²⁸⁰ *The Signs of the Times*, June 22, 1882; *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:71; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:593.

²⁸¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:189.

public worship, have considerably influenced the way prayers are offered in Adventist churches.

What were her core convictions about prayer? Ellen White defines prayer as follows:

Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Well-spring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience.²⁸²

Prayer, as a vital element of the Christian experience, also plays a key role when the church comes together in worship. In public prayer, the worship leader speaks directly to God on behalf of the congregation. In the typical free-church tradition, the prayer is extempore with the firm belief that “the opening of our hearts to our heavenly Father, the acknowledgment of our entire dependence, the expression of our wants, the homage of grateful love—this is true prayer.”²⁸³ Ellen White’s belief in the desirability of extemporaneous prayer was in tune with Adventist practice at the time.

It appears that Ellen White’s fundamental argument is that public prayer reveals the worship leader’s conception of God.²⁸⁴ It exposes his theological grounding and spiritual sensitivity. This either positively or negatively affects the congregation’s own approach to God.

5.5.2.1 Nature and Purpose of Public Prayer.

What is the nature and purpose of public prayer in Adventist worship? One of the main purposes of prayer is to lead the assembly consciously into the presence of God.

²⁸² *In Heavenly Places*, 83.

²⁸³ *Child Guidance*, 518.

²⁸⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 252.

“Prayer, whether offered in the public assembly, at the family altar, or in secret, places man directly in the presence of God.”²⁸⁵ The fact that public prayer provides corporate fellowship with God, means that the congregation steps on holy ground²⁸⁶ and must unequivocally approach their Maker with reverence.²⁸⁷

For Ellen White, reverence in public prayer is best expressed by our posture and language. Like other Adventists who offered extempore prayer, she held the opinion that prayers are better said with the eyes shut.²⁸⁸ The act of bending upon our knees before God demonstrates reverence. “To bow down when in prayer to God is the proper attitude to occupy.”²⁸⁹ She counsels, “Both in public and in private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before the Lord when we offer our petitions to Him.”²⁹⁰ “This act shows our dependence upon God.”²⁹¹ For Ellen White, not only is kneeling a sign of dependence, it is also a sign of our total surrender to the Spirit of God. She writes thus, “And when you assemble to worship God, be sure and bow your knees before Him. Let this act testify that the whole soul, body, and spirit are in subjection to the Spirit of

²⁸⁵ *My Life Today*, 18.

²⁸⁶ *Gospel Workers*, 178-179.

²⁸⁷ *Selected Messages*, 2:315; *Education*, 242, 243.

²⁸⁸ *Letter 29*, February 21, 1901.

²⁸⁹ *Manuscript 4b*, 1897.

²⁹⁰ *Gospel Workers*, 178; *Prophets and Kings*, 47.

²⁹¹ *Selected Messages*, 2:312.

truth.”²⁹² Above all, kneeling is an act of worship²⁹³ and a sign of “reverence and godly fear . . . humility and awe.”²⁹⁴

In addition to the kneeling posture, the language used in prayer also indicates reverence. The words used in public prayer either enrich or deaden the congregation’s sense of reverence. It is therefore important to carefully select the words used to address God. This is especially true in the context of extempore prayers where the search for suitable words that correspond to the norms of the faith might prove more arduous than in written liturgy. Ellen White is keenly aware that the language we use, no matter how limited and imperfect it might be, should best reflect our appreciation for God’s holiness and glory:

To hallow the name of the Lord requires that the words in which we speak of the Supreme Being be uttered with reverence. “Holy and reverend is His name.” Psalm 111:9. We are never in any manner to treat lightly the titles or appellations of the Deity. In prayer we enter the audience chamber of the Most High; and we should come before Him with holy awe. The angels veil their faces in His presence. The cherubim and the bright and holy seraphim approach His throne with solemn reverence. How much more should we, finite, sinful beings, come in a reverent manner before the Lord, our Maker!²⁹⁵

Public prayers can establish or destroy an atmosphere of reverence. Ellen White bemoans the fact that some leading in prayers were confusing approachability with overfamiliarity. She writes, “Some think it a mark of humility to pray to God in a common manner, as if talking with a human being. They profane His name by needlessly and irreverently mingling with their prayers the words, “God Almighty,” awful, sacred

²⁹² *Prayer*, 208.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Selected Messages*, 2:312.

²⁹⁵ *Prayer*, 292.

words, which should never pass the lips except in subdued tones and with a feeling of awe.²⁹⁶ According to her, such “careless and irreverent expressions [had] grieved the tender Spirit of the Lord and caused their petitions to be shut out of heaven.”²⁹⁷

Although she never prescribes an exact formula for public prayer, she believes “that there should be order in praying.”²⁹⁸ To her, the Lord’s Prayer is a model to follow: “The Lord’s Prayer was not intended to be repeated merely as a form, but it is an illustration of what our prayers should be—simple, earnest, and comprehensive.”²⁹⁹ “This prayer, for its beautiful simplicity, is without a parallel. It is a perfect prayer for public and private life; it is dignified and elevated, yet so simple that the child at its mother’s knee can understand it.”³⁰⁰ She believed “none will pray in vain if in their prayers are incorporated the principles contained therein.”³⁰¹

Ellen White makes a distinction between the nature of private and public prayer.³⁰² “A common meeting to worship God is not the place to open the privacies of the heart.”³⁰³ The role of the leader is to speak to God on behalf of the assembly, not to share his personal angst and concerns. In public prayers, the worship leader represents God’s people and becomes their mouthpiece. Hence, she admonishes: “Brethren, carry

²⁹⁶ *Gospel Workers*, 176.

²⁹⁷ *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1882), 70.

²⁹⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:145-6.

²⁹⁹ *Child Guidance*, 524.

³⁰⁰ *Prayer*, 176.

³⁰¹ *The Signs of the Times*, December 3, 1896.

³⁰² *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), 83.

³⁰³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:578.

the people with you in your prayers.”³⁰⁴ To do so, a public prayer needs to contain some definite qualities.

5.5.2.2 Characteristics of Public Prayer.

First, public prayer must be brief. Ellen White laments “the frequently long, inappropriate,”³⁰⁵ “tedious,”³⁰⁶ “prosy,”³⁰⁷ “formal”³⁰⁸ prayers. Such prayers, she writes, “weary the angels as well as the people who listen to them.”³⁰⁹ Instead, she believes “the prayers offered in public should be short and to the point.”³¹⁰

A second quality that public prayer should have is simplicity. “Our prayers in public should be short, and express only the real wants of the soul, asking in simplicity and simple trusting faith for the very things we need.”³¹¹ She further counsels, “High-flown language is inappropriate in prayer . . . Especially should the one offering public prayer use simple language, that others may understand what is said and unite with the petition.”³¹² Prayers in public should be offered in a natural tone of voice, not “upon a

³⁰⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:147.

³⁰⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:201.

³⁰⁶ *The Review and Herald*, May 28, 1895, 1; *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:616-617; *Gospel Workers*, 175-176.

³⁰⁷ *The Review and Herald*, October 10, 1882.

³⁰⁸ *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1925), 211.

³⁰⁹ *The Review and Herald*, October 10, 1882.

³¹⁰ *Evangelism*, 146; *The Review and Herald*, October 10, 1882.

³¹¹ *The Signs of the Times*, December 3, 1896.

³¹² *Gospel Workers*, 187.

high key, with a forced voice, in an unnatural strain and an unnatural tone.”³¹³ The prayer should be audible, “for unless those assembled with them can hear what is said, they cannot say Amen.”³¹⁴

A third quality of prayer is its spirituality. Ellen White abhors dried and dull prayers. She comments that public prayer should be offered with “heaven's vitality”³¹⁵ and is convinced that “spiritless prayers better not be uttered; for they fail to bless or edify, and are a mere form without vital power.”³¹⁶ “It is the heart-felt prayer of faith that is heard in heaven and answered on earth.”³¹⁷ She is quite explicit on this point:

All the flowery words at our command are not equivalent to one holy desire. The most eloquent prayers are but vain repetitions if they do not express the true sentiments of the heart. But the prayer that comes from an earnest heart, when the simple wants of the soul are expressed just as we would ask an earthly friend for a favor, expecting that it would be granted—this is the prayer of faith.³¹⁸

She urges, “We must not only pray in the name of Jesus, but by the inspiration and kindling of the Holy Spirit.”³¹⁹ Adventist worship does not depend on a liturgy *per se*; it relies much on the spirituality of its worship leaders. As a result, they play a key role in nurturing the spiritual vitality of the congregation. Private devotion and public prayer, and by extension corporate worship, are intrinsically interconnected. Adventist worship to a large extent depends on the vitality of private prayers and vice versa. Public worship is

³¹³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:617.

³¹⁴ *Christian Education*, 127.

³¹⁵ *The Review and Herald*, October 10, 1882.

³¹⁶ *Christian Education*, 129.

³¹⁷ *Gospel Workers*, 177.

³¹⁸ *My Life Today*, 19.

³¹⁹ *The Gospel Herald*, May 28, 1902.

the result of devotional life, but also its stimulus.³²⁰ For Ellen White, worship in general, and public prayer in particular, are not detached from life outside congregational worship. The whole life is a life of worship and a life of prayer. There are no dichotomies between the two spheres, for the whole Christian life is continuously lived in the presence of God.³²¹

For Ellen White, corporate prayer is a public “conversation with God,”³²² led by the worship leader. Public prayer is made reverently in the hearing of the assembly in the confidence that God hears and responds. Accordingly, public prayer also has a horizontal dimension. The role of worship leaders is to articulate the love, faith and hope of the congregation in their public prayers. As such, public prayer not only reaches God, it also teaches about God. Hence, the importance of the worshippers’ devotional life that match their high calling.

5.5.3 The Sermon

Faithful to the Free-Church tradition, the sermon is uncontestably at the centre of Adventist worship. What should one expect of a sermon? What is its purpose? How should the sermon be proclaimed and received? For Ellen White, understanding the role and impact of the sermon involves looking at three essential components of Christian proclamation: the Word of God, the preacher, and the congregation.

³²⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:382.

³²¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:61; See also *Bible Echo*, December, 1887, 178; *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:239, 274; *The Review and Herald*, August 16, 1881.

³²² *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 129.

5.5.3.1 *The Word of God.*

Ellen White emphasises the centrality of the Word of God in preaching.

Addressing Adventist preachers, she urges:

To my ministering brethren I would say, Preach the word. Do not bring to the foundation wood, hay, and stubble—your own surmisings and speculations, which can benefit no one. Subjects of vital importance are revealed in the word of God, and these are worthy of our deepest thought. But we are not to search into matters on which God has been silent.³²³

Following the same vein of thought, in the introduction to her book, *The Great Controversy*, she asserted, “In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”³²⁴ Accordingly, the “solemn, sacred work”³²⁵ of preaching should be firmly based on Scripture. Ministers “are to be the mouthpiece of God,”³²⁶ “the depositaries of His truth.”³²⁷ They have the great task of “handling the words of life.”³²⁸

The assumption here is that God still speaks to people and that He chooses to do so through the proclamation of His Word. This proclamation can in no way parallel the

³²³ *Gospel Workers*, 314.

³²⁴ *The Great Controversy*, vii, viii; See also *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 22 September 1910.

³²⁵ *Manuscript Releases*, 6:187.

³²⁶ *Evangelism*, 211.

³²⁷ *Manuscript Releases*, 6:187.

³²⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:319.

Incarnation, where God revealed Himself supremely to humanity. Yet, He makes Himself available through the preaching of His Word.

What should be the content of a sermon? Ellen White contends that every sermon should exalt Christ. She exhorts, “Put Christ into every sermon. Let the preciousness, mercy, and glory of Jesus Christ be dwelt upon until Christ is formed within, the hope of glory.”³²⁹ Elsewhere, she encourages that Christ should be the theme of Adventist preaching:

These are our themes—Christ crucified for our sins, Christ risen from the dead, Christ our intercessor before God; and closely connected with these is the office work of the Holy Spirit, the representative of Christ, sent forth with divine power and gifts for men. His preexistence, His coming the second time in glory and power, His personal dignity, His holy law uplifted, are the themes that have been dwelt upon with simplicity and power.³³⁰

Sermons should maintain the centrality of the doctrine of righteousness by faith³³¹ and emphasize the cross of Christ.³³² “No discourse should ever be preached without presenting Christ and Him crucified as the foundation of the gospel.”³³³ “Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel . . . This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every

³²⁹ *The Review and Herald*, March 19, 1895.

³³⁰ *Evangelism*, 187.

³³¹ *Gospel Workers*, 301; *Selected Messages*, 1:158; *Evangelism*, 191; *Selected Messages*, 1:372; *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:19; *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 560.

³³² *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:236; *Evangelism*, 187; *Gospel Workers*, 158; *The Review and Herald*, June 2, 1903.

³³³ *Gospel Workers*, 158.

believer.”³³⁴ “We are to preach Christ and Him crucified as the sinner’s only hope.”³³⁵

The cross was for Ellen White the hermeneutical key that opens the entire Scripture:

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.³³⁶

Having considered the sermon as a Bible-based, Christ-centred proclamation of the Gospel, we now turn to the one who has the task of delivering it—the preacher.

5.5.3.2 *The Preacher.*

The preacher's first task is to know the Word of God.³³⁷ White urges preachers to “earnestly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, and become conversant with them, in order to be teachers of Bible truth to others.”³³⁸ However, the sermon cannot be proclaimed in words only; faithful preaching also needs the “vitalizing power of the Holy Spirit.”³³⁹ Ellen White deplores the absence of the Word and of the Spirit from modern pulpits:

The words of the Bible and the Bible alone, should be heard from the pulpit. But the Bible has been robbed of its power, and the result is seen in a lowering of the tone of spiritual life. In many sermons of today there is not that divine manifestation which awakens the conscience and brings life to the soul. The hearers cannot say, “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by

³³⁴ *Manuscript Releases*, 21:37.

³³⁵ *Manuscript Releases*, 20:170.

³³⁶ *Gospel Workers*, 158.

³³⁷ *The Review and Herald*, April 6, 1886; *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:407, 411-412, 446, 498-499; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:528, 574; *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:143. See also Mervyn Warren, *Ellen White on Preaching* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010).

³³⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:407.

³³⁹ *Gospel Workers*, 165.

the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” Luke 24:32. There are many who are crying out for the living God, longing for the divine presence. Let the word of God speak to the heart. Let those who have heard only tradition and human theories and maxims, hear the voice of Him who can renew the soul unto eternal life.³⁴⁰

Ellen White sets out the relationship between the Holy Spirit and preaching as follows:

The preaching of the word is of no avail without the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit; for this Spirit is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit, will it quicken the conscience or transform the life. A minister may be able to present the letter of the word of God; he may be familiar with all its commands and promises; but his sowing of the gospel seed will not be successful unless this seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven. Without the co-operation of the Spirit of God, no amount of education, no advantages, however great, can make one a channel of light.³⁴¹

Ellen White deplores the fact that some preachers confused their fluency with God’s anointing, relying on their great talents and eloquence rather than on the Spirit.³⁴² To her, the damage was immense. “No one can tell what is lost by attempting to preach without the unction of the Holy Spirit.”³⁴³ Preaching is a deeply spiritual exercise that requires a spiritual preacher.³⁴⁴ She warns, “It is a fearful thing to minister in sacred things when the heart and hands are not holy.”³⁴⁵ Therefore, she counsels that “the Christian minister should never enter the desk until he has first sought God in his closet

³⁴⁰ *Prophets and Kings*, 626.

³⁴¹ *The Desires of Ages*, 671-672; see also *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 64.

³⁴² *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1875), 3:31; *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:380.

³⁴³ *Gospel Workers*, 151.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁴⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:31; See also *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:536.

and has come into close connection with Him.”³⁴⁶ “No man is qualified to stand in the sacred desk unless he has felt the transforming influence of the truth of God upon his own soul.”³⁴⁷ For Ellen White, concern for preaching reflects an integral concern for the preacher’s spirituality. The effect of a sermon on the life of the congregation will be in proportion to the effect it has on the life of the one who delivers it.

5.5.3.3 *The Delivery of the Sermon.*

The question we now turn our attention to is: how should the sermon be delivered? Perhaps one of the best ways to answer that question would be to understand the aim of the sermon. Concerning the goal of the sermon, Ellen White observes:

If they are true men of God, they will know that the object of preaching is not to entertain. It is not merely to convey information, nor to convince the intellect. The preaching of the Word should appeal to the intellect and should impart knowledge, but it should do more than this. The minister’s utterances, to be effectual, must reach the hearts of his hearers.³⁴⁸

Essentially, God speaks through the preacher’s faithful exposition of the Word so that there can be a response from the heart.³⁴⁹ However, faithful preaching is not only about content; it also includes the way it is done.³⁵⁰ She aptly observes that “much of the effect of discourses is lost because of the manner in which they are delivered.”³⁵¹ She further observes: the sermon’s “delivery should be carefully considered that the message

³⁴⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:315-316.

³⁴⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:113; *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:432-434; *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:526-527; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:179.

³⁴⁸ *Gospel Workers*, 152.

³⁴⁹ *Manuscript Releases*, 14:276.

³⁵⁰ *Letter 48*, 1902; *Evangelism*, 169.

³⁵¹ *Manuscript Releases*, 6:182.

may be presented in such a manner that it will be to the hearer as the voice of God.”³⁵²

With these facts in view, Ellen White believes that the preacher should bear in mind some basics of homiletics.

First, the preacher should know the Word, but also know the congregation. “The one whose special work it is to lead the people into the path of truth should be an able expositor of the Word, capable of adapting his teachings to the wants of the people.”³⁵³

Second, the preacher should be well-prepared before stepping into the pulpit, but also remain open to the Holy Spirit’s leading during the proclamation.³⁵⁴ Third, preachers

should avoid “tame, formal discourses”³⁵⁵ and place fervent conviction over dry theory.³⁵⁶

She complains of preachers “possessing only a cold, nominal faith, presenting the theory of the truth.”³⁵⁷ Instead of preaching in a “listless, unfeeling manner,” preachers should

have a “love for souls . . . be intense, and their zeal fervent.”³⁵⁸ Fourth, preachers should

combine the doctrinal and the practical in their sermons.³⁵⁹ Ellen White counsels that

“practical religion should have a place in every discourse.”³⁶⁰ Fifth, the preacher should

³⁵² *Manuscript Releases*, 6:181.

³⁵³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:260.

³⁵⁴ *Gospel Workers*, 165.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:337; *Gospel Workers*, 35.

³⁵⁷ *Gospel Workers*, 35.

³⁵⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:337.

³⁵⁹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:237.

³⁶⁰ *The Signs of the Times*, March 16, 1882.

avoid rambling³⁶¹ in their sermons and know “how to present them in a clear, connected manner.”³⁶² Sixth, preachers should use simple language “adapted to the minds of the common people.”³⁶³ As such, they should use “an easy style,”³⁶⁴ presenting “the truth in a clear, simple manner,”³⁶⁵ and “be able to point out the way of salvation through Christ in language eloquent in its simplicity.”³⁶⁶ Seventh, preachers “must eradicate from their speech every expression that is cheap or common”³⁶⁷ and have their message “clothed in chaste, dignified language.”³⁶⁸ Reverence³⁶⁹ and “a sense of solemnity”³⁷⁰ should characterize the sermon. Eighth, preachers should not rely on outward display, theatrical style, but depend on the truth of God’s Word.³⁷¹ Ninth, preachers must avoid emotionalism, fanaticism and sensational preaching.³⁷² Tenth, preachers should preach

³⁶¹ *Evangelism*, 181.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 648-649.

³⁶³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:260.

³⁶⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:36.

³⁶⁵ *Selected Messages*, 1:158; see also *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:337.

³⁶⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:409.

³⁶⁷ *Evangelism*, 211; see also *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 142-143, 318; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:582;

³⁶⁸ *Gospel Workers*, 166.

³⁶⁹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:615.

³⁷⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:27.

³⁷¹ *Gospel Workers*, 165, 383; *Manuscript Releases*, 9:299 *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:161.

³⁷² *Selected Messages*, 2:21; *Evangelism*, 184; *The Review and Herald*, December 3, 1895; *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:647.

short sermons that are to the point,³⁷³ not jumbling but articulating clearly and distinctly every word, speaking in the most natural way.³⁷⁴ Above all, Ellen White holds that the preacher should always seek to emulate his Lord,³⁷⁵ preaching “as one having authority, speaking the words of eternal life.”³⁷⁶

We now briefly consider the third element of the sermon event, the congregation.

5.5.3.4 *The Congregation.*

There is a three-way relationship in every sermon: the message, the messenger, and the listeners. Ellen White understands the sermon to be a shared experience where the listeners play an important role. In an article penned in the *Review and Herald* of April 7, 1885, she addresses the problem of listeners who fail to understand the true nature of the sermon.

Many do not look upon preaching as Christ's appointed means of instructing his people, and therefore always to be highly prized. They do not feel that the sermon is the word of the Lord to them, and estimate it by the value of the truths spoken; but they judge it as they would the speech of a lawyer at the bar—by the argumentative skill displayed, and the power and beauty of the language. The minister is not infallible, but God has honoured him by making him his messenger. If his hearers listen to him as though he were not commissioned from above, they will not respect his words, nor receive them as the message of God. Their souls will not feed upon the heavenly manna; doubts will arise concerning some things that are not pleasing to the natural heart, and they will sit in judgment upon the sermon, as they would upon the remarks of a lecturer or a political speaker. As soon as the meeting closes, they will be ready with some complaint or sarcastic remark, thus showing that the message, however true and needful, has not profited them. They esteem it not; they have learned the habit of criticising

³⁷³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:261; *The Review and Herald*, September 2, 1890; *The Signs of the Times*, May 17, 1883, *Evangelism*, 658, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 256; *Gospel Workers*, 167-168, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:261.

³⁷⁴ *Gospel Workers*, 91.

³⁷⁵ *The Review and Herald*, March 5, 1895; *The Review and Herald*, March 5, 1901; *The Desire of Ages*, 254; *Evangelism*, 56, 175-176, 439, 670; *Ministry of Healing*, 469, *Gospel Workers*, 117; *The Review and Herald*, May 18, 1897.

³⁷⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:523.

and finding fault, and they pick and choose, and perhaps reject the very things that they most need.³⁷⁷

White's argument is based on the recognition that preaching is a critical part of God's plan in nurturing His people. Her concern is that preachers should not be perceived simply as popular orators.³⁷⁸ As imperfect as they are, they are God's instruments of divine mediation for His message. They are not a source of authority, but only chosen instruments. Hence, the failure to acknowledge these basic elements makes the task of listening impossible.³⁷⁹ Listeners should not suspend their thinking. Instead, the sermon must be brought to the test of the Bible. Instead of being overly suspicious about the sermon, listeners should seek for God's voice in it with a humble spirit.³⁸⁰ Anything that distracts from the hearing of God's Word is to be seen as potentially dangerous.

The sermon, then, is not just about listeners who hear and a preacher who speaks. It is God speaking to His people through the "foolishness of preaching."³⁸¹ It is not simply human talk. It is divine thoughts in human words. Ellen White's point here is that the congregation must recognise God behind the act of preaching and respond accordingly.

To help congregations in the task of properly hearing the sermon, White provides worshippers with practical instructions. First, to benefit from the sermon, listeners must recognise that faith is foundational to the appropriation of God's Word. "If the hearers

³⁷⁷ *The Review and Herald* April 7, 1885.

³⁷⁸ *Counsels to the Church*, 250.

³⁷⁹ *The Review and Herald*, April 7, 1885.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *The Review and Herald*, April 7, 1885.

thus listen in faith, expecting a message from God through his delegated messenger, they will receive it and be profited.”³⁸² Second, the congregation needs to be attentive listeners, remembering that a lack of focus might make them lose the very words that are most needed for their lives.³⁸³ As she repeatedly puts it, “God wants attentive hearers.”³⁸⁴ Hence, she cautions fellow believers:

Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness and indifference. When the word of life is spoken, you should remember that you are listening to the voice of God through His delegated servant. Do not lose these words through inattention; if heeded, they may keep your feet from straying into wrong paths.³⁸⁵

Third, the congregation should comprise active listeners. For instance, with regard to the role of parents and children during the sermon, she specifically states:

In listening to the sermon, let parents and children note the text and the scriptures quoted, and as much as possible of the line of thought, to repeat to one another at home. This will go far toward relieving the weariness with which children so often listen to a sermon, and it will cultivate in all a habit of attention and of connected thought.³⁸⁶

In this way, the sermon is not finished once the preacher sits down, but continues to reverberate in the life of the believers and continues to engage their mental faculties outside the confine of public worship. Fourth, the congregation should be responsive. Ellen White deplores the fact that, “There is too much formality in our religious services. The Lord would have His ministers who preach the Word energized by His Holy Spirit; and the people who hear should not sit in drowsy indifference, or stare vacantly about,

³⁸² *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892), 285.

³⁸³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:493; *Messages to Young People*, 266.

³⁸⁴ *Messages to Young People*, 266.

³⁸⁵ *Messages to Young People*, 266.

³⁸⁶ *Education*, 252.

making no responses to what is said.”³⁸⁷ In contrast, she stresses, “where the church is walking in the light, there will ever be cheerful, hearty responses and words of joyful praise.”³⁸⁸ Fifth, the congregation should magnify Christ, not the preacher, no matter how excellent his preaching might be.³⁸⁹ Finally, listeners should apply the truths preached to their daily lives. She questions: “What can we expect but deterioration in religious life when the people listen to sermon after sermon and do not put the instruction into practice?”³⁹⁰ White asserts that “it is only by living a life in harmony with that of the Saviour that we meet the requirement of God to be not only hearers but doers of the Word.”³⁹¹

5.5.4 Giving

Adventists do not worship God only with their lips through singing, praying and preaching. They also worship Him through the tangible sharing of their income. Ellen White puts it this way: “gifts and offerings formed an essential part of God's worship.”³⁹² In essence, our giving is an expression of gratitude to God.³⁹³ In an article written in *The Review and Herald*, in 1886, she gives a clear explanation on the theological reasons behind the act of giving:

³⁸⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:318.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:399-400.

³⁹⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:425.

³⁹¹ *Manuscript Releases*, 6:182; See also *The Review and Herald*, March 7, 1893.

³⁹² *Christ's Object Lessons*, 300.

³⁹³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:386; *Prophets and Kings*, 707; *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:576.

We belong to God; we are His sons and daughters—His by creation, and His by the gift of His only-begotten Son for our redemption. “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” The mind, the heart, the will, and the affections belong to God; the money that we handle is the Lord’s. Every good that we receive and enjoy is the result of divine benevolence. God is the bountiful giver of all good, and He desires that there shall be an acknowledgment, on the part of the receiver, of these gifts that provide for every necessity of the body and the soul.³⁹⁴

Succinctly put, giving is rooted in this basic notion that we are not ours. We owe everything to God because we belong to Him by virtue of creation, redemption, and covenantal relationship. Let’s consider this view briefly.

The first reason to worship in giving is to acknowledge that “God manifested His love in the work of creation . . . and pronounced it very good.”³⁹⁵ Creation is God’s gracious act and we owe Him our existence. The “One omnipotent in power, great in goodness and mercy, has created all things.”³⁹⁶ Hence, “as an acknowledgment that all things came from him, the Lord directed that a portion of his bounty should be returned to him, in gifts and offerings.”³⁹⁷ Therefore, our giving is a self-reminder that we belong to the Creator. For this reason, Ellen White exhorts fellow Adventists: “Come with your offerings as God has blessed you. Show your gratitude to your Creator, the Giver of all your benefits, by a freewill offering. Let none who are able come empty-handed.”³⁹⁸

A second reason to give in worship is that God gave us the very best in Jesus Christ. “The gift of God to man is beyond computation. Nothing was withheld. God

³⁹⁴ *The Review and Herald* April, December 8, 1896; *Christian Service*, 72.

³⁹⁵ *Australasian Union Conference Record*, June 1, 1900.

³⁹⁶ *Australasian Union Conference Record*, June 1, 1900.

³⁹⁷ *The Review and Herald*, September 10, 1889.

³⁹⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:576.

would not permit it to be said that He could have done more, or revealed to humanity a greater measure of love. In the gift of Christ, He gave all heaven.”³⁹⁹ The supreme gift of God is the greatest incentive for us to give. By our giving, we demonstrate tangibly that we have been gripped by God’s marvelous grace and that we now belong to Him as His redeemed children.⁴⁰⁰

A third reason to give is because of our covenantal relationship with God. We give in consideration of His continuous goodness towards us.⁴⁰¹ We give in appreciation of God’s bounties⁴⁰² and in gratitude for His endless blessings.⁴⁰³ By giving, we recognise that “the great and infinite God lives not unto Himself, but for the benefit and blessing of every being and every object of His creation.”⁴⁰⁴ God constantly gives, so why should we not give? In an article written in 1881, Ellen White put this point across with irony: “When our Heavenly Benefactor forgets our returning wants; when God forgets to be gracious, and none of his gifts flow into our barns, our granaries, and our cellars, —then may we plead an excuse for withholding our offerings.”⁴⁰⁵ Essentially, we give, not to receive more from God; we give because we have already received much from Him.⁴⁰⁶

³⁹⁹ *Australasian Union Conference Record*, June 1, 1900.

⁴⁰⁰ *Christ’s Objects Lessons*, 299; see also *The Review and Herald*, January 4, 1881; *The Review and Herald*, December 25, 1900.

⁴⁰¹ *Christian Service*, 80.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴⁰³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:598.

⁴⁰⁴ *Australasian Union Conference Record*, June 1, 1900.

⁴⁰⁵ *The Review and Herald* January 4, 1881.

⁴⁰⁶ She contrasts two kinds of spirits: “The spirit of liberality is the spirit of Heaven. The spirit of selfishness is the spirit of Satan. Christ’s self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. He gave all that he had, and then gave himself, that man might be saved. The cross of Christ appeals to the benevolence of every follower of the blessed Saviour. The principle illustrated there is to give, give. This carried out in

By giving, we emulate and portray God's character to all. "God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world."⁴⁰⁷

5.5.4.1 The Purpose.

What is the purpose of giving then? We have already noted that giving expresses our covenant relationship with God. We are created, redeemed and sustained by His grace. Basically, giving is an act of worship. For Ellen White, the church has the privilege to worship God through her tithes and offerings in acknowledgement of His provision and ownership in Christ.⁴⁰⁸ "The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth, - that God is the source of every blessing to his creatures, and that to him man's gratitude is due for the good gifts of his providence."⁴⁰⁹

Ellen White considers the tithe principle as divine in origin,⁴¹⁰ "ordained by God,"⁴¹¹ "sacred, reserved by God for Himself."⁴¹² To render the tithe of our income is a recognition of divine sovereignty, "an acknowledgment that all things came from

actual benevolence and good works is the true fruit of the Christian life. The principle of worldlings is to get, get, and thus they expect to secure happiness; but carried out in all its bearings, the fruit is misery and death." *The Review and Herald* October 17, 1882.

⁴⁰⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, 300.

⁴⁰⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:479.

⁴⁰⁹ *The Review and Herald*, September 10, 1889.

⁴¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 525.

⁴¹¹ *The Desire of the Ages*, 616.

⁴¹² *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:249; *Christian Service*, 66; see also *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:395.

Him”⁴¹³ a reminder that He is “the true proprietor” of everything.⁴¹⁴ Through the tithe, God “asks us to acknowledge Him as the Giver of all things.”⁴¹⁵ Ellen White affirms that “the New Testament does not reenact the law of the tithe, as it does not that of the Sabbath; for the validity of both is assumed”⁴¹⁶ as confirmed in passages as Matthew 23:23.

Ellen White also urges believers to give free-will offerings from the remaining nine-tenth. Whereas the tithe is a recognition of dependence on God and of our duty towards Him,⁴¹⁷ our offerings are a token of gratitude and thanksgiving to God.⁴¹⁸ Both are to be used for the support of the Gospel ministry and the advancement of mission in the world as proof of our love to God and humanity.⁴¹⁹ Hence giving is not only a visible way of expressing our praise and thanksgiving, it is also a way of signaling tangibly our commitment to partner with God in His salvific mission.

5.5.4.2 The Result.

Recognizing that we are still pilgrims on this earth, treading the path of sanctification, Ellen White views generous giving as an antidote against selfishness and

⁴¹³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 525.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 526.

⁴¹⁵ *The Review and Herald*, February 4, 1902.

⁴¹⁶ *The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1882.

⁴¹⁷ *Letter* 51, 1902.

⁴¹⁸ *The Acts of the Apostles*, 75; *Testimonies to the Church* 5:150.

⁴¹⁹ *The Review and Herald*, May 9, 1893, par. 7; See also *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1940), 77; *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:246, 250; *The Review and Herald*, December 17, 1901, par. 13; *The Review and Herald*, July 14, 1896, par. 1; *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:464; *Christian Service*, 52, 114, 215; *Manuscript Releases*, 29, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:447.

greed.⁴²⁰ She writes: “The constant practice of God's plan of systematic benevolence weakens covetousness and strengthens benevolence.”⁴²¹ To her, self-denial is needed in giving.⁴²² In addition, the Christian should consider it a privilege to give.⁴²³ “The very act of giving expands the heart of the giver, and unites him more fully to the Redeemer of the world.”⁴²⁴ By giving, we draw closer to Christ⁴²⁵ and become more like God;⁴²⁶ we develop a character for heaven.⁴²⁷ Our gifts are in no way a means of buying God’s favour.⁴²⁸ Also, God does not put an estimate on us based on the amount we give.⁴²⁹ He does not require us to give more than we can⁴³⁰ and does not expect us to be coerced into giving.⁴³¹ Yet, He marks our motives in giving⁴³² to see whether they are prompted by

⁴²⁰ *The Youth Instructor*, September 10, 1907; *Christian Service*, 72; *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:405; *The Review and Herald*, December 8, 1896.

⁴²¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:548.

⁴²² *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:127.

⁴²³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:177.

⁴²⁴ *The Review and Herald*, October 31, 1878.

⁴²⁵ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:405.

⁴²⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:255.

⁴²⁷ *The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1893.

⁴²⁸ *The Review and Herald*, May 9, 1893.

⁴²⁹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:224.

⁴³⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:269.

⁴³¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:474; *Christian Service*, 203; *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:413.

⁴³² *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:177; *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:519.

love.⁴³³ As such, giving is purely a test of heavenly fellowship.⁴³⁴ For that reason, we give with reverence,⁴³⁵ voluntarily,⁴³⁶ sincerely,⁴³⁷ regularly,⁴³⁸ “strictly, honestly and faithfully.”⁴³⁹

For Ellen White, giving is a demonstration of our Christianity and true worship of God. Because we are now reconciled with God, we place a high priority on⁴⁴⁰ the free and glad giving of our tithes and offerings.⁴⁴¹ As we give with a grateful heart, God blesses us accordingly.⁴⁴² Truly, worship is giving and giving is worship. Christ demands our whole heart and undivided affections.⁴⁴³ Ellen White’s argument is that God cannot accept our gifts if they do not come from the heart.⁴⁴⁴ Giving expresses our total allegiance to God, which is at the core of true worship.

⁴³³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:398-399.

⁴³⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:408; *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:469.

⁴³⁵ *The Review and Herald*, December 25, 1900.

⁴³⁶ *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:413.

⁴³⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:55.

⁴³⁸ *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:267, 272; *Education*, 239; *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:237; *Christian Service*, 81.

⁴³⁹ *Christian Service*, 82; *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:474.

⁴⁴⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:477; *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 369; *The Review and Herald*, January 4, 1881.

⁴⁴¹ *Manuscript 159*, 1899; *Counsels on Stewardship*, 66; *Review and Herald* 26 December 1882; *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:238;

⁴⁴² *Christian Service*, 90, 175; *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:267-268; *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:304-305.

⁴⁴³ *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:160.

⁴⁴⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:169.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The foregoing sections of this chapter have revealed significant interactions between Ellen White's understanding of God, the Sabbath, and worship. Her understanding of the Sabbath reveals God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. All these elements find their way in her Christian understanding of worship that is offered to God the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. The emphasis is on the theme of participation where God is both the Subject and Object of our worship.

The present chapter however, has not exhaustively discussed every element in the writings of Ellen White that relates to worship. It has not explored, for example, the areas of ethics and evangelism, which are of direct relevance to her thoughts on Adventist worship. A fuller account would include a detailed exploration of the close connection between Ellen White's understanding of corporate worship and daily discipleship. Our focus here has been on corporate worship.

It is illuminating to place Ellen White's understanding of Adventist corporate worship alongside Christopher Ellis's study on Baptist and Free Church worship. Ellis outlines four underlying convictions which are at the heart of Baptist worship and one overarching theme that governs its practice. The four underlying convictions are: (1) attention to Scripture; (2) personal devotion and openness to the Spirit; (3) a concern for the community of the church; and (4) a missiological and eschatological dimension, focused on the Kingdom.⁴⁴⁵ The overarching theme, the "presiding conviction," that brings Baptist worship into focus is the central Christian affirmation that 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Corinthians 12:3).⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Ellis, *Gathering*, 228-229.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 229-232.

White's understanding and Ellis' 'underlying convictions' of worship have clear congruence. In the Free Church understanding, corporate worship is primarily determined by religious convictions. The covenant community is shaped by its total devotion to God through close adherence to Scripture and openness to the Spirit as it seeks and shares the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. Free Church worship emphasises confessing the lordship of Christ over His Church. This confession of faith in the Free Church understanding, however, "consists less in verbalizing a particular theological content than in acknowledging him whom the content of the confession is identifying."⁴⁴⁷

In the next chapter, we reflect on the liturgical theology that has emerged from our discussion on Adventist corporate worship. I will propose what I believe to be the core of the Adventist understanding of worship. It is articulated around the significance of Sabbath-keeping for Adventist worship and how this worship is a celebration of salvation history.

⁴⁴⁷ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: the Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 146.

CHAPTER SIX

6 SABBATH, THE THEOLOGICAL CORE OF ADVENTIST WORSHIP

This dissertation has used a fourfold structure for establishing the theological core of Adventist worship, namely: 1. an establishing of the liturgical facts; 2. the theological analysis of those facts; 3. a synthesis of the liturgical facts and their undergirding theology; 4. a broader theological analysis of steps 1-3.

The foregoing chapters have been faithful to this undertaking. We have established the liturgical facts by outlining the history and highlighting the practice and understanding of Adventist worship in Chapters Three to Five.

In each chapter, attempt has been made to establish the centrality of the Sabbath to Adventist worship. Because of its central location in Adventist understanding and practice of worship, the Sabbath thus becomes a suitable pivot around which we can expound the theological core of Adventist corporate worship.

This chapter will develop the key idea that worship and the Sabbath are recapitulations and celebrations of the salvation story. They both highlight God's crucial actions of creation, redemption and restoration. In these mighty acts, God reveals Himself as worthy of praise and adoration. In three major sections below, I will draw, from this core understanding, implications for Adventist worship in particular, and Christian worship in general.

In this chapter, the key idea that we want to develop is that both worship and the Sabbath are recapitulations and celebrations of the salvation story. They both highlight God's crucial actions of creation, redemption and restoration. In these mighty acts, God reveals Himself as worthy of praise and adoration. In three major sections below, I will draw, from this core understanding, implications for Adventist worship in particular, and Christian worship in general.

6.1 RECAPITULATING SALVATION HISTORY

6.1.1 Christian Worship

A theologically adequate understanding of Christian worship is only possible when viewed from the perspective of God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ. According to Robert Webber, "worship does God's story." By this, he means that, as the church assembles to worship, it "gathers to sing, tell, and enact God's story of the world from its beginning to its end."¹

Similarly, in the Adventist understanding, salvation has a historical character.² The biblical metanarrative has four major parts: creation-fall-redemption-new creation, spanning from Eden to the Earth made new.³ In the divine economy, God reveals Himself, especially through His saving activity.⁴ From Genesis to Revelation, God is supremely active in reconciling humanity to Himself, constantly revealing Himself in the process.⁵ God's plan for

¹ Robert Webber, *Ancient Future Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 29, 40.

² Ivan Blazen, "Salvation" in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 273-274.

³ *Ibid.*, 275-278.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁵ Daniel Oscar Plenc, 'Toward an Adventist Theology of Worship' in Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ed., *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church Studies. Adventist Ecclesiology 3* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2016), 103-132. In his study, Plenc analyses the biblical data to develop a biblical

His creation climaxed in the Christ-event. Through His perfect obedience to the Father's will and His sinless life, Jesus accomplished salvation for humanity.⁶ The ultimate self-revelation of God took place on the cross where Christ revealed both God's love and His justice by dying for sinful humanity.⁷

Moreover, salvation, in Adventism, is understood as a free gift of divine grace available to all who receive it by faith in Christ. Being reconciled with God, the Christian now lives a life of obedience and victory over sin through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁸ The final objective of God's saving activity is the full restoration of the image of God in humanity. This involves the end of the cosmic controversy and complete eradication of sin from the universe as well as the confirmation of God's love and justice and His eternal reign over the entire creation.⁹ As such, the Adventist soteriological understanding is essentially evangelical in orientation.

Having noted that Adventist soteriology is basically evangelical, the question then arises: How is this understanding of salvation related to worship? In his classic treatment of Adventist worship, Raymond Holmes writes: "The church is a people who assemble in worship to praise the Lord for His deliverance and to anticipate His soon return. Such a worship is a recapitulation of salvation history."¹⁰ The primacy of salvation history as the

theology of worship and provide a number of concepts and principles, essentially based on the revelation-response model.

⁶ Blazen, 307-308.

⁷ Ibid., 307.

⁸ Ibid., 307-308.

⁹ Ibid., 271-300; 307-313; See also, Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomenon*, 421-453.

¹⁰ C. Raymond Holmes, *And Worship Him*, 20.

foundation of worship cannot be underestimated since worship is an *anamnesis* of the divine economy. Salvation history gives the structure and substance to Christian worship, instilling the memory of God's mighty acts in the hearts of the worshipping community. It guides and molds worship. The character and saving acts of God, especially as revealed in Christ, undergird the Adventist understanding of worship.¹¹

Indeed, Adventists are not the only Christians who perceive worship as recapitulation of salvation history. Swiss Reformed liturgical theologian, Jean-Jacques von Allmen, for instance, explored worship as an enactment of salvation history. Worship, according to von Allmen, is "the recapitulation of the history of salvation."¹² By this, he means that the worship of the church sums up "the major events in the history of salvation and so, implicitly of the whole history of salvation."¹³ He posits that this history is especially revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ Accordingly, he calls for a more intentional emphasis on creation, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; the ongoing *missio dei* in the world and the eschatological kingdom of God.¹⁵ For von Allmen, worship recapitulates, rehearses and celebrates the history of salvation and it is "by its worship that the Church becomes itself, becomes conscious of itself, and confesses itself as a distinct entity."¹⁶ In this, he echoes

¹¹ Ed Zinke, "The Revelation of His Righteousness," in *The Great Controversy and the End of Evil: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Ángel Rodríguez in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, Gerhard Pfandel, ed., (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), 191-200.

¹² Von Allmen, *Worship*, 32.

¹³ Ibid., *Worship*, 32.

¹⁴ Ibid., *Worship*, 21-32.

¹⁵ Ibid., *Worship*, 69-72.

¹⁶ Ibid., *Worship*, 42.

Schmemmann who saw the “genuine discovery of worship as the life of the Church, the public act which eternally actualizes the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ.”¹⁷

Significantly, von Allmen argues that the church assumes its liturgical role by celebrating salvation history through the sanctification of time.¹⁸ He agrees with other theologians that *time* is an essential element of the *ordo*.¹⁹

6.1.2 Sabbath

Interestingly, the Sabbath combines both the elements of salvation history and the sanctification of time as a foundation and an expression of worship. Adventist theologian, Sakae Kubo puts it aptly: “[T]he significance of the Sabbath spans the history of the world from beginning to end. In a sense it takes up the whole plan of salvation, so comprehensive is its scope.”²⁰

This understanding of the Sabbath is not unique to Adventism. Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann, for instance, have not missed the significance of the Sabbath in their respective

¹⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 14.

¹⁸ Von Allmen, *Worship*, 210; See also his treatment of Sunday, 213-239.

¹⁹ See for instance James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 52-87; Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 36-43, 66-79; B. Chilton, *Redeeming Time: The Wisdom of Ancient Jewish and Christian Festal Calendars* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1-20; Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 161-173. Writing on Christian worship, Webber argues that the “Christian conception of time is important because it plays a significant role in the worship of the church.” Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old & New*, 164.

²⁰ Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and Second Advent* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), 8.

theologies.²¹ Barth stressed the “radical importance” of the Sabbath because it sets “a beginning and a goal” of the Gospel.²² Moltmann also explored the Sabbath by linking it to the doctrines of creation, redemption and eschatology.²³ Other Christians have also explored the Sabbath subject and, like Barth and Moltmann, ultimately apply their understanding of the Sabbath to Sunday worship.²⁴

Crucially, the Sabbath informs the way Adventists think about and practice their worship. This is particularly relevant to our study for, whereas a large number of Christians follow a liturgical calendar to structure their worship, Adventists mainly determine their liturgical time by keeping the seventh-day Sabbath.²⁵ For them, “[a] proper observance of the

²¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley, trans., T. H. L. Parker et al., vol. 3, part 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961); Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatic: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. T. F. Torrance G. W. Bromiley, trans., A. T. Mackay, T. H. L. Parker, H. Knight, H. A. Kennedy and J. Marks, vol. 3, part 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 47-72. See also “Creation and Covenant” in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatic: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley, trans., O. Bussey, J. W. Edwards, and Harold Knight, vol. 3, part 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 98-9, 212-39; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God the Gifford Lectures 1984-1985*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993). I’m particularly indebted to Higashide Katsumi for the different references in his treatment of Barth and Moltmann theologies in PhD dissertation, *Meanings of the Sabbath for Worship in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*.

²² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley, trans., T. H. L. Parker et al., vol. 3, part 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 57, 54.

²³ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation*, Their reflections have deepened Adventist discussions on the subject. Hans K. LaRondelle, “Contemporary Theologies of the Sabbath,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1982); Likewise, Raoul Dederen highlights how Barth’s treatment of the Sabbath highlights the “revelation of the nature of God and of His purpose.” See, Raoul Dederen, “Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982), 196, 304.

²⁴ Lynne. M Baab, *Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Walter Bruggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014); Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989); Christopher J. Donato, ed., *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011); Edward O’ Flaherty, *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend: Managing Time in a Global Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010); Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006).

²⁵ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 282.

Sabbath . . . is an integral part of an attitude of worship and reflects a genuine reverence for God.”²⁶ *The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* states, “The Sabbath holds a very special place in the lives of Seventh-day Adventists.”²⁷ This point is explicitly made by Holmes who stresses that the Sabbath is so embedded in Adventist history and identity that “it is not possible for a Seventh-day Adventist to think about worship or to participate in worship without reference to the Sabbath and its meaning.”²⁸ It is critical to note that “Seventh-day Adventists observe the day in a spirit of worship and devotion of heart and not legalistically as a means of divine favor.”²⁹

This sense of the Adventist attachment to the seventh-day Sabbath finds its clearest expression at worship time every Saturday morning when worshippers greet each other with a familiar “Happy Sabbath.” This simple expression links the joy of gathering for worship with an emphasis on a distinct day, the seventh day.

What understanding of God do Adventists communicate when they assemble for communal worship every Saturday? In the following section, I highlight how the Adventist practice of keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath is tied to their understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer and Restorer. This understanding constitutes the foundation for an Adventist theology of worship.

²⁶ Denis Fortin, “A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective on Worship” in Thomas Best F and Heller Dagmar, eds.2 *Worship Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications* (Vol. 194. World Council of Churches, 2004), 168.

²⁷ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 173.

²⁸ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 27.

²⁹ *Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996), 11:505.

6.2 SABBATH AND CREATION

6.2.1 Foundational Principles

For Seventh-day Adventists, the Sabbath cannot be separated from the creation week. Ellen White connects the origin of the Sabbath to creation thus: “When the foundations of the earth were laid, then was also laid the foundation of the Sabbath.”³⁰ Commenting on the Israelite economy, White posits that “Sabbath observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgement, on the part of all who dwell upon the earth, that God was their rightful Sovereign: that they were the works of His hands and the subjects of His authority.”³¹ Accordingly, Sabbath observance, for White, is closely linked to God’s creatorship and sovereignty.³²

In Adventist thinking, the foundational reality of worship is that it has its source in the creatorship of God.³³ In worship, God’s people open themselves to the Creator’s presence.³⁴ According to this understanding, God does not only transcend time; He also involves Himself in time, especially as His people gather to worship Him.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, 95.

³¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 48.

³² See for instance, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 307, 336-337. The same ideas are shared in Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song*, 32-33 and Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ‘Elements of Adventist Worship: Their Theological Significance’ in Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, ed., *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church*, 136.

³³ Canale comments on this understanding of Adventist worship: “As we approach the presence of the infinite and mysterious Creator, a sense of awe and reverence will fill our hearts and houses of worship.” Fernando Canale, “Principles of Worship and Liturgy,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 20/1-2, 2009, 97-98.

³⁴ Fernando Canale, “Principles of Worship,” 98.

In Adventist thinking, the Sabbath encapsulates God's benevolent intention.³⁵ Creation finds its culmination in the Sabbath when God "ended all the work He had made . . . rested on the seventh day . . . blessed and sanctified it" (Gen. 2:2, 3).³⁶ Adventists stress the unique character of the Sabbath by insisting that God not only "rested on the seventh day, from all the work God had done" (Gen. 2:3b), He also "blessed and sanctified it," thus separating the seventh day from the realm of the ordinary and devoting it to a sacred purpose.³⁷ The first stanza of the song, *Crowning Jewel of Creation* (SDA Hymnal 385), represents this understanding:

*Crowning jewel of creation,
Blest and hallowed, sanctified;
Time and changes all transcending,
Shared forever, glorified.
Refrain
Blessed Sabbath made for man,
Gift from the Creator's hand.*

³⁵ Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999), 237.

³⁶ Balentine observes that the Sabbath "holds the key to the liturgy of creation" in that "it is a kind of climax that is marked by rest." Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 92.

³⁷ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 282-283.

On the seventh-day, not only do Adventists believe that they enter into divine rest and divine blessing;³⁸ they also believe that they enter into holy time.³⁹

Besides, the creation account has special significance for Adventists because of its Christological focus. They affirm the biblical teaching that Christ is the Agent of both creation and redemption, the One through whom God creates, sustains, and reconciles to Himself all things in heaven and things on earth (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-20; Eph. 1:10, 1 Cor. 8:6, Heb. 1: 2, 10; John 1:3).⁴⁰ “Since He made all things,” Ellen White contends, “He made the Sabbath.”⁴¹ Accordingly, “[a]s the Creator, Christ gifted humanity with the Sabbath, of which He is Lord (Mark 2:28).”⁴²

As such, the Sabbath reminds humanity of its unique place in God’s creation. Created in the *imago dei*, humanity is invited to enter into the *imitatio dei* by participating in God’s

³⁸ This blessing of the seventh day is not an end in itself. For Adventists, it is intended to be a means through which God showers His blessings for the benefit and enjoyment of the entire human race (Ellen G. White, *Education*, 251). In an Adventist-Catholic Conversation held in Genève, Switzerland, May, 2002 Rodríguez observed: “If the verb “to bless” (*brk*) expresses the basic idea of bestowing benefits upon something or someone, then when God blessed the Sabbath He bestowed it with benefits that would be enjoyed by those who will keep it. A day that is not blessed is a day deprived of positive content for human beings (Jer 20:14).” Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Biblical Sabbath: The Adventist Perspective, Biblical Research Institute 2,” accessed July 31, 2018 at https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Sabbath-Catholic_2002.pdf.

³⁹ Raymond Holmes observes that “in the beginning of earth’s history God did not consecrate a place for His dwelling. Rather, He consecrated a period of time in which His creatures were to meet Him in fellowship and communion.” (see, C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song*, 28. The Sabbath derives its holiness from God not from man. It is called the “holy Sabbath” (Ex. 16:23; 31: 14, 15; 35:2; cf. Isa. 58: 13) and man is enjoined to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8-18; Deut. 5:12-14).

⁴⁰ For the centrality of Christ in Adventist thinking, see Raoul Dederen, ‘Christ: His Person and Work’ in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 160-204. Dederen asserts (p. 198) that “Seventh-day Adventists advocates a Christ-centered theological system” which depicts Christ as Creator, Redeemer, Lord of the Sabbath, High Priest and soon-returning King.

⁴¹ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 288.

⁴² Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 285. She further observes that “by him it was set apart as a memorial of creation”, hence pointing “to Him as both the Creator and Sanctifier. Ibid., 288. Elsewhere, she refers to the Sabbath as a token of Christ’s love and power. Ellen G. White, *From Heaven with Love* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1984), 185.

original rest. Theologically, being has priority over doing, or as Moltmann puts it, “existence precedes activity.”⁴³ For Adventists, this implies that the Sabbath is more than a time for breaking off from work to recuperate from fatigue.⁴⁴ Sabbath keeping is relational and sanctifying in the sense that God invites humanity to draw near in order to partake of one of the most significant aspects of His character, that is, holiness.⁴⁵

How does the idea of God sanctifying the Sabbath inform the Adventist understanding of worship? In order to answer this question, I explore in the following section the significance that the Sabbath draws from creation and its implications for Adventist worship.

6.2.2 Implications for Adventist Worship

6.2.2.1 *Worship as God-centred.*

“[T]he first theological meaning of the Sabbath is its celebration of God’s creative activity.”⁴⁶ It points humanity to the only true God, the Maker of heaven and earth, in opposition to all false deities.⁴⁷ For, Ellen White, “God gave to men the memorial of His creative power, that they might discern Him in the works of His hand.” She adds, “The Sabbath bids us behold in His created works the glory of the Creator.”⁴⁸

⁴³ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation: The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985*, 4th edition (London: SCM Press, 1997), 286.

⁴⁴ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 47.

⁴⁵ Mathilde Frey, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: An Exegetical and Theological Study,” PhD Dissertation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2011, 71-72.

⁴⁶ Fritz Guy, “The Presence of Ultimacy” in *Festival of the Sabbath*, Roy Branson, ed., (Takoma Park, MD: Associations of Adventist Forums, 1985), 30.

⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 48; Idem, *Testimonies to the Church* 7:139; Idem, *Selected Messages* 2:107; Idem, *The Story of Redemption* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 383; Idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 336.

⁴⁸ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 25.

There is a direct correspondence between the Sabbath's revelation of God as Creator and our response to Him as worshippers. Adventist theologian, Raoul Dederen affirms that "[t]he Sabbath illuminates our understanding of God. The Sabbath yields theology in the strict sense of the term, i.e., it provides us with a doctrine of God as Creator of heaven and earth, and of man's final goal in Him."⁴⁹ As man remembers his Creator, he rediscovers his theocentric and doxological identity. The Adventist insistence on God's creatorship is illustrated by the inclusion of Joachim Neander's famous hymn, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!" as the first hymn in the *Adventist Church Hymnal*.

According to Ellen White, the Sabbath is an affirmation of creation; it brings us into communion with the Creator.⁵⁰ She further notes that the Sabbath "was designed to keep the living God ever before the minds of men as the source of being and the object of reverence and worship."⁵¹ She insists that the Sabbath was given "to preserve among men a knowledge of Himself" so that minds would be "directed to Him as the true living God, and that through Him we may have life and peace."⁵² In the same way, John Andrews, an early Adventist theologian, wrote:

The importance of the Sabbath as the memorial of creation is that it keeps ever present the true reason why worship is due to God. For the worship of God is based upon the fact that he is the Creator and that all other beings were created by him. The Sabbath therefore lies at the very foundation of divine worship, for it teaches this great truth in the most impressive manner, and no other institution does this. The true

⁴⁹ Raoul Dederen, "Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth Strand, ed., (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982), 296.

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, *From Heaven with Love*, 185.

⁵¹ Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 4:56.

⁵² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:349.

ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in the distinction between the Creator and his creatures.⁵³

In sum, the Sabbath reveals the character and purpose for the entire creation: to worship the Creator. Hence, in Adventist thinking, to worship on the Sabbath means to subscribe belief in a perfect Creator who is worthy of honour and praise.⁵⁴ As such, it is “an antidote for idolatry.”⁵⁵

Essentially, a theology of worship that arises from the Sabbath of creation points to the God who initiates and defines our worship. Sakae Kubo reflects on what the Sabbath tells us about divine initiative: “The Sabbath also tells us that God takes the initiative. He creates, He gives, He provides, He invites, He blesses, He sanctifies. Man is the created recipient, the spectator, the guest.”⁵⁶ A theology of worship centred around the Sabbath and divine initiative illustrates a fundamental fact about Christian theology—the fact that human worship is conditioned by God’s grace, not human efforts. God draws humanity into worship and because the initiative is His, all adoration, confession, thanksgiving, petition, and dedication should be seen as a response.

6.2.2.2 Worship as Relational.

A God-focused, grace-filled understanding of the Sabbath orients worshippers to a right relationship with God. This is important because the centre of Christian worship is God, not humanity. For this reason, authentic worship is based on a correct understanding of God.

⁵³ John Nevins Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*, 1873, 510.

⁵⁴ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness: A Theological Study of the Good News of the Sabbath for Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1990), 70.

⁵⁵ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 284.

⁵⁶ Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 40.

It is important to realise that the Sabbath sheds a distinct light on God's character and intent for His creation. The God of the Sabbath is a relational God, "a present God, a Person who is committed to Creation and One who is involved in Creation up close and personal."⁵⁷ He is not the god of the deists who creates the world and then immediately distances Himself from the work of his hands, or a pantheistic deity who gets so close to creation that he cannot be distinguished from it. He is close to but distinct from the world, ever close and yet not identical with it. Adventist theologian Hans K. LaRondelle observes that,

Without the divine communion and fellowship on the seventh day, without man's entering into God's rest on that day, the whole creation would be cut off from its Maker and necessarily have to find its purpose and sense in itself. Then God's rest indeed would rather be the cryptic indication of God's return to the aseity (the absolute self-existence) of the inner glory of His being and existence, leaving man and the world to themselves.⁵⁸

LaRondelle stresses the relational character of the Sabbath by adding, "God's rest then means His ceasing the work of creation *in order to* be free for the fellowship with man ... the *imago Dei*, his festive partner."⁵⁹ Similarly, Moskala points out that "the culmination point of God's creative activity is not the sixth day (humans as a crown of God's physical creation), but the seventh-day Sabbath (humans in a vivid mutual relationship with their Holy Creator, worshipping Him)."⁶⁰ Transcendent in His nature, absolute in His power, God draws near and initiates the contact. In other words, "[t]he Sabbath is an experience of *Immanuel*,

⁵⁷ Sigve Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of The Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 35.

⁵⁸ Hans K. LaRondelle, *Perfection and Perfectionism* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1971), 72.

⁵⁹ LaRondelle, *Perfection and Perfectionism*, 72.

⁶⁰ Jiří Moskala, "The Sabbath in the First Creation Account," in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 13/1 Spring 2002, 59-60.

‘God with us.’”⁶¹ It points to an offer for communion with the Triune God since “biblical spirituality can only take place within the parameters of divine and human relationality.”⁶² In this sense, Adventist spirituality is lived within the context of the “God who dwells with His people within historical time and space.”⁶³

Accordingly, the basic posture of God towards humanity is that of loving relationship.⁶⁴ Through the presence of the Spirit, God offers Himself in a personal relationship of grace and His people respond to Him in worship. Or as Wolterstorff puts it, in worship we approach God as “One who participates in mutual address.”⁶⁵ Worship exists when God’s love is accepted and publicly acknowledged. The God who is absolute in perfection and power is also absolute in love. He creates special time for His “children to have special fellowship with Him and with their fellow worshippers.”⁶⁶ In this understanding, Sabbath worship is a way of nourishing essential relationships—our vertical experience with God and our relationship with fellow believers, a true *koinonia*.

How does the relational character of worship play out in Adventist liturgy? Undoubtedly, God’s movement in Adventist worship is recognised especially in the reading and proclamation of the Word, the quarterly Communion Service and the benediction. Through the Word and the ordinances, actuated by the presence of the Holy Spirit, God

⁶¹ Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 239.

⁶² Fernando L. Canale, “Doctrine of God,” in *Adventist Theological Handbook*, 139.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁶⁴ Adventists are not alone in stressing the relational character of the Sabbath. Barth puts it this way: He [God] was content with the creation of the world and man. He was satisfied to enter into a relationship with this reality distinct from Himself, to be the Creator of this creature, to find in these works of His Word the external sphere of His power and grace and the place of His revealed glory. (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* vol. 3.1, 1970 edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1970), 214-215).

⁶⁵ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology*, 53-70.

⁶⁶ Kenneth Strand, ‘The Sabbath’ in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 509.

brings the worshipper into a living relationship with Himself. The songs, prayers, tithes and offerings with their content of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication and dedication, bring to God the worshipper's responsive self-offering in awareness and acceptance of Christ's offering.

In essence, the Sabbath is a reminder that worship is not predominantly based on what worshippers do but on how they relate to God. Divinely-initiated relationship precedes, permeates and empowers worship. The relational understanding of the Sabbath points to the Trinitarian character of Adventist worship. The worship of the church is ultimately the work of the Godhead. In their treatment of the Trinity, Adventist theologians Moon, Whidden and Reeves ask this practical question: "To whom should we pray?"⁶⁷ With Scriptural references, they answer this question by affirming that our petitions and praises can be addressed to either the Father, to the Son or the Holy Spirit because "the persons of the Godhead are truly one in nature, character and purpose."⁶⁸ However, they insist that for Adventists, "the normal pattern of prayer is to the Father, in the name of the Son, with the knowledge that the "groanings" of the Holy Spirit expedite our prayers."⁶⁹ Yet, in practice, Adventist worship is discreetly Trinitarian in the sense that references to the term "Trinity" or expressions such as "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" are very rare in Adventist worship. Broadly speaking, this means that Adventist worship is not always explicitly Trinitarian while still practicing its fellowship with the Triune God.

⁶⁷ Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity*, 272-273.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 273.

⁶⁹ Whidden, Moon, and Reeve, *The Trinity*, 273.

6.2.2.3 *Worship as Remembrance.*

A key liturgical and theological notion comes with Sabbath worship: remembrance. The Sabbath is the only commandment in the Decalogue to begin with the word ‘remember.’ This word may carry several concepts. Although the exact signification of the term ‘remembrance’ is much debated,⁷⁰ theologians would generally agree that “to remember” goes beyond the exercising of cognitive memory.⁷¹ In its most basic sense, to ‘remember’ means to stand in the presence of what God has already done.⁷²

In the Decalogue, ‘remembrance’ is a divine command that is included with the other nine precepts. Hence, for Adventists, the command to “remember the Sabbath day” (Ex. 20:8) is invested with not only a liturgical imperative, but with a moral one as well. To put it differently, “[t]he focus of the Sabbath command is thus within the orbit of human beings’ inalterable moral relationship with their Creator, not of the changing ritual forms by which they worship their Creator.”⁷³ Inscribed at the heart of the Decalogue, the commandment to keep Sabbath is a reminder “(1) to accept God’s gift for humanity, (2) to follow the divine Exemplar’s pattern, (3) to acknowledge Him as Creator, and (4) to participate in God’s rest.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See for instance, Paul Bradshaw, “Anamnesis in Modern Eucharistic Debate,” in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism*, ed., Michael Alan Signer (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

⁷¹ Referring to the Sabbath, Walter Brueggemann comments: “The act of remembering here [Exod. 20:8], as in the remembering of the eucharist (sic), means to appropriate actively as a present reality.” Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” In *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed., Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 845.

⁷² Knight, *A Brief History*, 28.

⁷³ *Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 11:489

⁷⁴ Hasel, 30.

Without knowing or remembering who God is and what He has done, God's people cannot offer authentic worship.⁷⁵ In worship, God retells His creative and redemptive actions in Christ, reminding worshippers of their unique identity in Him. This explains why Fanny Crosby's 'Don't Forget the Sabbath' (that she wrote with Sunday in mind) is an Adventist favourite. The first stanza of the hymn (SDA Church Hymnal 388) states:

Don't forget the Sabbath,
The Lord our God hath blest,
Of all the week the brightest,
Of all the week the best;
It brings repose from labor,
It tells of joy divine,
Its beams of light descending,
With heavenly beauty shine

The purpose of remembering points to the 'then' of creation but is also directed to the 'now' of faithful response. For Adventists, remembrance also happens on the level of an active response.⁷⁶ "The act of remembering has a prospective outlook, that is, remembering in order to obey."⁷⁷ In the words of Adventist theologian Gerhard Hasel, "the memory of the past (retrospective aspect) is to lead to right action in the present and to faithful obedience in the future (prospective aspect)."⁷⁸ Within this understanding, past, present and future are closely related and obedience is a basic response to remembrance.

⁷⁵ Eugene H. Merrill, "Remembering: A Central Theme in Biblical Worship," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, March 2000, 43/1, 27-36.

⁷⁶ Gerald Klingbeil, "The Sabbath Law in the Decalogues: Creation and Liberation as a Paradigm for Community," *Revue Biblique*, 2010, T-17-4, 506.

⁷⁷ Ekkehardt Mueller "The Sabbath Commandment in Deuteronomy 5:12-15," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 14/2 (Fall 2003), 145; see also, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 289.

⁷⁸ Gerhard Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch" in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Kenneth Strand, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982), 30-31.

6.2.2.4 *Worship as Holy Time.*

Memory and holiness are intrinsically linked. God's people are called to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8). For Adventists, to enter into the Sabbath means to enter into holiness in time.⁷⁹ To put it differently, the Sabbath is a sanctuary in time.⁸⁰ It should be noted that it is the use of time, more than the use of space, which expresses Adventist worship most strongly. For instance, Adventists consider the whole of the Sabbath, not only the hour of worship, to be holy time.⁸¹ This understanding of the holiness of the Sabbath sets a boundary between what is sacred and what is common.

In worship, Adventists view themselves as meeting a holy God in holy time because of God's special presence in it. The most appropriate response to God's holy presence is reverence, which Adventists often equate with 'no useless noise or talking' during worship service. It is thus that many traditional Adventist worship services use Fanny Cosby's "Tread Softly" (SDA Hymnal 379) as their Introit.

Verse 1

Be silent, be silent,
A whisper is heard;
Be silent, and listen,
Oh treasure each word.

Refrain

Tread softly, tread softly,
The Master is here;
Tread softly, tread softly,
He bids us draw near.

⁷⁹ Referring to the creation story where God sanctified the Sabbath, Adventist theologian, Samuele Bacchioni, comments: "It is noteworthy that the word "holy" is used for the first time in the Bible with reference, not to an object such as an altar, a tabernacle, or a person but with regard to time, the seventh day. Samuele Bacchioni, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, 83.

⁸⁰ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951).

⁸¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 144-145.

In general, Adventist worship expresses holiness by adopting a meditative posture rather than exuberance. Yet, there has been a discrepancy in the way Adventists ascribe sacredness to worship. Although Adventists affirm that reverence is the appropriate response in God's presence,⁸² occasional lapses do occur.

Ellen White wrote years ago that "[n]early all need to be taught how to conduct themselves in the house of God"⁸³ and that Adventist "churches need to be educated to greater respect and reverence for the sacred service of God."⁸⁴ Half a century later, McCall complained "that too often there is a growing tendency within Adventist churches to lose this sense of the presence of a Holy God, which is so essential to true worship."⁸⁵ He blamed the problem to "the lost conception of the reality of worship."⁸⁶ Additionally, he traced the problem to Adventist reactions against "the coldly legalistic phases of formal worship" which has unfortunately led them to "develop a public service that all too often resembles the decorum of a lecture crowd or even of a club meeting, rather than a congregation of ps."⁸⁷ In this, Adventism seems intractably attached to its nineteenth-century heritage of revival-frontier speaker-oriented styles of worship, which have been accused of lacking a sense of transcendence.⁸⁸

⁸² *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 145.

⁸³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for The Church*, 5:496.

⁸⁴ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 314.

⁸⁵ Clark B. McCall, "Reverence Essential in Acceptable Worship," *Ministry Magazine*, August 1957, 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁷ Clark B. McCall, 10.

⁸⁸ See for instance, Gordon W. Lathrop, "New Pentecost or Joseph's Britches? Reflections on the History and Meaning of the Worship Ordo in the Megachurches," *Worship* 72, 1998, 522-523; John Jefferson Davis, *Worship and the Reality of God: An Evangelical Theology of Real Presence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP

For Ellen White, however, the problem is not the lack of a sense of transcendence, but rather the lack of understanding of worship, coupled with a lack of spirituality. First, she asserts that “uncultivated ideas” cannot appreciate holy things, for “unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things.”⁸⁹ Second, she insists that the holiness of the Sabbath can only find its true meaning in a holy people (see Ex. 31:13).⁹⁰

Yet, the question remains: how can sinful beings live holy lives and offer proper worship to God? According to Ellen White, “In order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.”⁹¹ “All that man can do without Christ is polluted by selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith that makes us holy.”⁹²

For this reason, Christ’s sanctifying power in the lives of worshippers is attached to Sabbath-keeping.⁹³ The sanctifying power of the Sabbath becomes a reality only insofar as the p allows the Sabbath to bring him/her into a living relationship with God through Christ.⁹⁴

Academic, 2010), 102-104; James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 141-142.

⁸⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:500

⁹⁰ Ellen G. White considers sanctification as “the work of a lifetime” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 65). For more on her understanding of sanctification, see Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006).

⁹¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 283.

⁹² Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 59.

⁹³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 288.

⁹⁴ Roy E. Gane, “Sabbath and Sanctification,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 22/1 (2011), 3-15.

Kenneth Strand echoes Ellen White when he writes: “True observance of God’s Sabbath involves the sanctification of life which Christ gives.”⁹⁵ Likewise, Jacques Doukhan states, “The Sabbath will not be holy without human beings; holiness of the Sabbath implies the holiness of men and women.”⁹⁶ Similarly, for Sakae Kubo, Sabbath does not “simply mean holiness of time, but holiness in time, or holy people.”⁹⁷ As such, the Sabbath is a sign of that sanctified and sanctifying relationship (Ex. 31:12, 13; Ezek. 20: 12, 16).

Such an understanding of the Sabbath underlines not only the holiness of the day but also the holiness of God’s people brought about by encountering God in it. In typical Free Church understanding, holy worship can only be offered by holy people.⁹⁸ Ecclesiologically speaking, this is a vision of a regenerated community of disciples who have accepted the lordship of Christ and who are eager to live their baptismal identity. Worship is offered with joy, but also in humility in recognition of the people’s utter sinfulness and constant need of God’s grace.

This leads us into our next section, the Sabbath and redemption as it relates to Adventist worship.

⁹⁵ Kenneth Strand, ‘The Sabbath’ in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 514.

⁹⁶ Jacques B. Doukhan, “Loving the Sabbath as a Christian: A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective,” in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, eds., Tamara C. Askenasi, Daniel J. Harrington, and William H. Shea (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1991), 156.

⁹⁷ Sakae Kubo, *The Experience of Liberation* in Roy Branson, ed., *Festival of the Sabbath* (Takoma Park, MD: Association of Adventist Forums, 1985), 46.

⁹⁸ See Graydon F. Snyder and Doreen M. McFarlane, *The People are Holy: The History and Theology of Free Church Worship* (Macon, GA: Mercer Press, 2005).

6.3 SABBATH AND REDEMPTION

6.3.1 Foundational Principles

The Sabbath has a second major purpose for Seventh-day Adventists: it is a symbol of God's redemptive work in Christ.⁹⁹ The third stanza of the hymn, *Far From All Care*, penned by Douglas Aufranc (SDA Hymnal 394) links Christ's work of redemption to the rest of the Sabbath:

*Lord of the Sabbath, Savior and Creator,
Calm now the throbbings of each troubled breast.
Speak to our hearts the peace of Thy commandments,
Breathe on each soul fair Eden's hallowed rest.*

This link between redemption and Sabbath is not arbitrary. Sabbath observance marked the Israelites' release from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 5:12-15). After instructing His people to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy, God gave the basic reason: "remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15).¹⁰⁰

Thus, just as the creation of the world culminated in the Sabbath, so did the Exodus from Egypt.¹⁰¹ God's goal in liberating His people was for worship (see for instance, Ex. 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 12:31; 19:1, 13). God's act of liberation became the foundation

⁹⁹ Even in 1860, before the official organization of their denomination, Adventists believed Christ turned the Sabbath into a "great temple of divine worship, where sacrifices, prayers, hymns of praise and holy teachings alone should be witnessed," a day sacred to "divine worship and deeds of benevolence "Observance of the Sabbath." *Review & Herald*, February 16, 1860, 100.

¹⁰⁰ Bacchiochi notes that "the fact that the theological scope of the Sabbath is enlarged in Deuteronomy to include the remembrance of the Exodus indicates that this institution is not static but dynamic. Its meaning and function increase with the unfolding of salvation history" (See, Samuele Bacchiochi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, 139).

¹⁰¹ See Jürgen Moltmann discussion on the link between Sabbath and Exodus in *God in Creation*, 287.

upon which His people would recover their identity as a believing and worshipping community, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex.19: 5-6). Significantly, “God, not a place, was the destination of the liberated people” because “what they were meant to be could only be found in what God is.”¹⁰² Certainly Canaan was a destination for Israel, but not the ultimate destination. Ultimately what God was leading His people into was His presence through right worship, unencumbered by constant reminders of slavery. However, the central focus of Adventist Sabbath worship is not the Exodus with its man-made sanctuary; it is the cross of Christ. Worship is offered in and through Christ, the Redeemer, humanity’s substitute and example.

Essentially, the story of salvation is an inexhaustible treasure to understand and celebrate divine love and justice. Alienated from God and lost in sin, humanity deserved to die; yet Christ came and delivered humankind by His death on the cross. Adventists believe that “Christ’s death and resurrection from the grave lie at the very heart of the plan of salvation.”¹⁰³ Out of love, “Christ offered Himself once for all when He offered Himself . . . This is not to be repeated.”¹⁰⁴ Calvary provides the supreme example of divine self-giving and self-disclosure in human history. Through Christ’s death and resurrection, humanity is reconciled to God. “We owe everything to grace,” maintains Ellen White, “free grace, sovereign grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in our Saviour effected our redemption, and our adoption to heirship with Christ.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*, 86.

¹⁰³ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 375.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Heppenstall, *Christ Our High Priest*, 50.

¹⁰⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 6:268.

Adventist worship, therefore, is a grateful response to God’s work of redemption in Christ. “The restoration of fellowship through the infinite sacrifice of His Son reaffirms God as the exclusive object of worship for humans.”¹⁰⁶ The Sabbath, according to Adventists, testifies to this fact. Adventists believe “[t]he Sabbath marks not only the completion of Creation Week, but also the completion of Passion Week.”¹⁰⁷ In their understanding, the redemptive meaning of the Sabbath was supremely illustrated in the crucifixion. As in the creation account, Christ completed His earthly mission on the sixth day and rested from His ‘finished’ work (John 19:30) on the seventh-day, infusing it with the added significance of a completed redemption.¹⁰⁸ Adventists explain it this way:

When Christ finished His work of Creation—His first great act in world history—He rested on the seventh day. The rest signified completion and accomplishment. He did the same at the end of His earthly ministry, when He completed the second great act in history. On Friday afternoon, the sixth day of the week, Christ finished His redemptive mission on earth. His last words were, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Scripture emphasizes that when He died, “it was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin” (Luke 23:54 NIV). Following His death, He rested in a tomb, thus symbolizing that He had accomplished the redemption of the human race.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Angel Manuel Rodriguez, *Elements of Adventist Worship: Their Theological Significance*, 135.

¹⁰⁷ Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 238.

¹⁰⁸ Skip McCarthy “The Seventh-Day Sabbath” in Arand, Charles, Craig L. Blomberg, Skip MacCarty, and Joseph A. Pipa, *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*. Christopher John Donato, ed., (Nashville TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 65. Norman Gulley compares creation Friday and creation Sabbath with crucifixion Friday and crucifixion Sabbath and sees Christ as central in both: “On creation Friday He gave life to Adam and Eve. On crucifixion Friday He gave life to everyone who accepts it. On creation Friday Christ gave the gift of life to two humans and their posterity. On crucifixion Friday Christ gave the gift of eternal life to whoever accepts it. How significant that the Sabbath following the two gifts was time for celebration of the completed work of Christ.” Norman Gulley, “Basic Issues between Science and Scripture: Theological Implications of Alternative Models and the Necessary Basis for the Sabbath in Genesis 1–2,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 14/1, 223.

¹⁰⁹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 286.

With the Sabbath, the “it is good” of Creation merged with the “it is finished of redemption as the Author and Finisher once again rests in completion.”¹¹⁰ Kenneth Strand points out that “[t]he Sabbath as a sign of redemption actually has precedence over the Sabbath as a memorial of Creation,” because “[o]nly those who are redeemed in Christ can truly recognise and understand what creation means.”¹¹¹ Redemption points back to the meaning of creation, i.e. communion with God. Accordingly, the salvation guaranteed in Jesus Christ leads believers to reflect on His act of creation and celebrate their place in it.

Hence, Sabbath worship for Adventists is Christ-centred because it emphasises “Christ’s twofold role as Creator and Redeemer.”¹¹² The One who performed the miraculous act of creation is the same One who performed the miraculous act of liberation on the cross. “It was the perfect, divine hands of Christ that first gave man life; and it is the hands of Christ, pierced and blood stained, that will give man eternal life.”¹¹³ Adventists, therefore, see no split in the divine economy. They see the Sabbath as being associated with both creation and redemption. In both events, Christ displays Himself as the Sovereign Lord. At the same time, Adventists do not celebrate Christ’s resurrection by worshipping on Sunday. Rather, they associate His resurrection with the individual’s new life in Christ, as symbolized by baptism (Rom. 6: 3-4).¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 298.

¹¹¹ Kenneth Strand, “The Sabbath,” in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 509.

¹¹² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 286.

¹¹³ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 88. Compare Ellen G. White, *Education*, 132: “The hand that sustains the heavens in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed on the cross for us.”

¹¹⁴ This position has been consistently held by Adventists over the years. For instance, in 1861, B.F. Snook stressed that baptism is a memorial of the burial and resurrection of Christ (Col. 2:12). See, B. F. Snook, *Christian Baptism* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of Review and Herald Office, 1861). Thirty years later, E.J. Waggoner emphasised the same point: “Baptism signifies the death and resurrection of Christ; but it signifies our acceptance of that sacrifice, and that we actually share His death and resurrection. See, Ellet Joseph Waggoner, *Baptism: Its Significance* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1891), 5.

6.3.2 Implications for Adventist Worship

In the preceding section, I have outlined how Adventist worship is impacted by the understanding of the Sabbath as a symbol of God's redemptive work. In the following sections, I would like to highlight the implications of understanding Adventist worship as a Christ-centred fellowship, characterized by a sense of delight.

6.3.2.1 *Worship as Christ-centred.*

The person of Christ and Sabbath celebration are inseparable in Adventist thinking. For them, Christ as the Lawgiver could not be against the Sabbath, of which he is the Lord (Mark 2:28). Christ, in His inaugural Sabbath sermon (Luke 4:18-19), made it clear that He had come to fulfil God's restoration agenda (Is 61:1-2; cf Is 58). Unsurprisingly, Jesus chose to perform so many of His miracles on the Sabbath.¹¹⁵ These healings, according to Strand, "called attention to His divinity, to His Oneness with the Father and to His work of salvation."¹¹⁶ Even in His debates with the Pharisees over the observance of the Sabbath Jesus challenged the manner, not the legitimacy of Sabbath observance.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ For a discussion on Jesus' Sabbath healings, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest and Human Restlessness*, 144-156. See also Mark 1:21-28 [Luke 4:31-37]; Matthew 12:9-14 [Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38, 39]; Matthew 10:11, 12; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-4; John 5:1-18; John 7:19-24; John 9:1-41.

¹¹⁶ See Kenneth A. "The Sabbath." *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Commentary Reference Series* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 12:504.

¹¹⁷ James Dunn observes that the contention revolved more around "a question of *how* the Sabbath should be observed, not *whether* the Sabbath should be observed." James Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus: The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 48. Similarly, Specht observes: "The Pharisees treated the day as though man were created to serve the Sabbath, rather than the Sabbath meeting the needs of man." Walter F. Specht, 'The Sabbath in the New Testament,' in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed., (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982), 96. Crucially, it was "His custom" to worship on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16).

Raymond Holmes argues that “[t]he Sabbath for the Christian gets its meaning from Christ.”¹¹⁸ In celebrating God on the Sabbath, Adventists affirm that God has acted decisively in human history in the person of Jesus Christ. The Sabbath tells the story of a Covenant-Making God.¹¹⁹ Though supreme in glory, He maintains a connection with his creation in an effort to redeem and restore what He has made. Indissolubly linked to the Sabbath, Adventist worship services tell this story, continually proclaiming Jesus Christ and His saving grace.¹²⁰

For Adventists, “all truth, all doctrine, all worship, must be understood and grasped in relation to the living Christ.”¹²¹ This centrality of Christ can be seen in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Hymnal*. Whereas the hymnal includes 14 hymns dedicated to the Holy Spirit (Hymns 257-270) and 41 specific hymns dedicated to God the Father (Hymns 74-114), it has 172 hymns dedicated to Jesus Christ (Hymns 115-286). Thus, 76% of all hymns specifically addressed to a member of the Trinity pertain to Jesus Christ.

Such a Christocentric emphasis is instructive. On the one hand, this could represent an imbalanced Trinitarian focus, a problem that has been noted in other Christian bodies.¹²² On the other hand, the predominance of such hymns could markedly indicate that Adventist worship is thoroughly Christ-centred. Many of their hymns take the form of meditations on the cross, such as Isaac Watts’s “When I Survey The Wondrous Cross,” (SDA Hymnal 155),

¹¹⁸ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 36. Kenneth Strand puts it this way: “The basis for both our theology and our Sabbathkeeping is a close personal relationship with Christ, our Savior. He is the Center for which all our religious beliefs and activities radiate.” (Kenneth Strand, ‘The Sabbath’ in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 514).

¹¹⁹ Kenneth Strand, ‘The Sabbath’ in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 509.

¹²⁰ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 22-38.

¹²¹ Edward Heppenstall, *Our High Priest* (Washington, D.C: Review & Herald, 1977), 68.

¹²² See for instance, Robin Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster), 2005.

George Bennard's "The Old Rugged Cross" (SDA Hymnal 159), or Chris Tomlin's "At the Cross (Love Ran Red)" in more contemporary services.

Raymond Holmes sees the centrality of Christ and its relationship to the Sabbath as follows:

Worship for the Christian centres in redemption, and redemption centres in Christ. We do not worship because of the Sabbath. We worship on the Sabbath because of what Christ has done, and is doing, for us redemptively. It is his act of redemption that gives meaning to the Seventh-day Sabbath. Redemption is the fulfilment of the Sabbath's meaning.¹²³

Adventist worship is preoccupied with the reconciling ministry of Christ. As a "symbol of the believer's entering into the gospel rest," the Sabbath serves as a reminder "that true worship cannot be separated from the gospel."¹²⁴ Spiritual rest and true worship can only be found in the contemplation of Christ's finished work – whether at creation or on the cross.

Hence, no matter how important the Sabbath is to Seventh-day Adventists, Christ remains the defining fulcrum of their worship. Sakae Kubo affirms, "The central focus of every worship service must be what God has done for His people through Jesus Christ. The Sabbath is a celebration of redemption."¹²⁵ Whether it is in the reading and proclamation of God's Word, in the offering of music, prayers or offerings, or in the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism, Christ remains the centre.

¹²³ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1984), 37.

¹²⁴ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 291.

¹²⁵ Sakae Kubo, 'The Experience of Liberation' in *Festival of the Sabbath*, Roy Branson, ed., (Takoma Park, MD: Association of Adventist Forums, 1985), 52.

It must be noted here that the locus of Adventist worship is not only Christ's atoning death but His continuing ministry in heaven.¹²⁶ According to Adventist theology, the focus in worship should not only be on a glorified cross and an empty tomb but also a living and coming Christ who is now ministering in the heavenly sanctuary.¹²⁷ In other words, not only does Adventist worship look back to creation and forward to the second coming; it also focuses on what Christ is doing in the present, as He ministers now in "the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb. 9:24).¹²⁸ In Adventist worship, there is no other Mediator other than Jesus Christ.¹²⁹ Ellen G. White repeatedly refers to Jesus as "the connecting link"¹³⁰ who is uniquely qualified to stand between God and humanity.

¹²⁶ Ellen White goes as far as to write: "The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith." Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 221.

¹²⁷ Holmes describes it this way: "When Seventh-day Adventists assemble for worship they not only exercise historical memory and "remember" the past events in the history of God's grace, but their faith actively reaches into the realms heaven itself today. Such faith follows Jesus from the cross to the crown, from the thorns on His brow to the throne of God." C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 41.

¹²⁸ Alain G. Coralie, "The Trinitarian Dynamic of Worship," *Ministry*, March 2011, 21-22. Moskala summarizes this understanding as follows: "What happened on the cross is a unique, unparalleled, non-repeatable, and unprecedented divine act of salvation (Heb. 10:12, 14) from which all the benefits flow out, including the intercessory ministry of Christ for us today." Jiří Moskala, "The Meaning of the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ on Our Behalf in the Heavenly Sanctuary," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 28/1 (2017): 3-25. This emphasis on the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is our Intercessor is not unique to Adventism. On the significance of the Christ's heavenly ministry by non-Adventists, see for example Gerrit Scott Dawson, *Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ's Continuing Incarnation* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: on the Significance of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); J. J. von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 21-41; Sotorios Christou, *The Priest and the People of God: A Royal Priesthood* (Cambridge: Phoenix Books, 2003, 1-23; Duncan Forrester, James McDonald and Gian Tellini, *Encounter With God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 33-35; David Peterson, *Engaging with God: a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 228-260; James Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 32. See also his comments on Heb. 8:1-2 in, 5 and 21-31 and 'The Place of Jesus Christ in our Worship' in Ray Anderson, ed., *Theological Foundations for Ministry* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 349-351; Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: A Systematic Theology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 62-70.

¹²⁹ Frank Holbrook, *Christ's Session*, 166.

¹³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies, Series B* 14.2; Idem, *Testimonies to the Church* 8:178; Idem, *Signs of the Times* June 6, 1895; Idem, *Signs of the Times* June 6, 1895; Idem, *Manuscript* 32a-1894; Idem, *Manuscript* 52-1896.23; Idem, *Manuscript* 67-1910.27; Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah—Book III*, 307.

As the Mediator of the New Covenant and our *leitourgos* (Heb. 8:2),¹³¹ Christ is uniquely qualified to cleanse and purify our tainted worship and prayers in order to offer them spotless to the Father. Rather than disincarnating and etherealising Jesus, such an understanding recognises Jesus' full humanity in heaven. "Our Savior bears the names of all His people on His heart in the holy place."¹³² As our High Priest, Christ carries our names, our lives, our petitions and praises on his heart as He ministers in the sanctuary. "As our representative He appears continually before the face of God in our stead."¹³³ To put it differently, in the very heart of the Trinity is a human face we can recognise.

This image of Christ leading worshippers has the potential to counteract Pelegian tendencies and earthly sacerdotalism. "In Christ the believer is invited to come boldly to the throne of grace."¹³⁴ "Every believer has direct access to Christ, and an intimacy with God that displaces any earthly mediator."¹³⁵ Within such a vision, the local worship leader does not act on behalf of worshippers but amongst them in recognition that a single high priest now serves on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. Worship, offered in Christ, is therefore, the affair of the whole church.

¹³¹ For Christ as *leitourgos*, see James Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996, 32. See also his comments on Heb. 8:1-2 in, 5 and 21-31 and 'The Place of Jesus Christ in our Worship' in Ray Anderson (ed.), *Theological Foundations for Ministry* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 349-351.

¹³² Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object's Lessons*, 148.

¹³³ Frank Holbrook, *Christ's Session*, 167.

¹³⁴ Edward Heppenstall, *Christ our High Priest*, 53.

¹³⁵ Geroe W. Reid, "Toward an Adventist Theology of Worship," accessed April 3, 2018, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/advtheoworship.pdf>, 6.

For Ángel Rodríguez, the supreme importance of Christ's intercession must find its way into Adventist pulpits.¹³⁶ Perhaps Adventist preaching has not caught up with its professed theology. The Adventist theological insistence on the high priestly ministry of Christ has not yet found its way into their hymnody. The 1985 edition of the Adventist hymnal contains only four hymns dedicated to Christ's heavenly priesthood (*SDA Hymnal* 177-180).¹³⁷ And yet a transcendent vision of Christ's heavenly ministry theologically grounds their worship in Christ for "[w]ithout Christ's intercession, not a prayer could be heard, not a service accepted."¹³⁸

6.3.2.2 Worship as Delight.

"Happy Sabbath!" is often the first greeting people hear at an Adventist worship service as the celebrant welcomes the worshipping community. With the Sabbath comes not only a sense of completion, satisfaction, and celebration, but also a divine invitation for humanity to fellowship with God – "the occasion for the vertical relationship,"¹³⁹ and the horizontal. As a result, joy becomes an important and integrated part of Sabbath celebration. In the Adventist understanding and experience, "the Sabbath is a gift of gladness,"¹⁴⁰ "a day

¹³⁶ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Elements of Adventist Worship: Their Theological Significance" in Ángel Manuel Rodríguez ed., *Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church Studies, Adventist Ecclesiology 3* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2016), 142.

¹³⁷ *SDA Hymnal* 177-180. Hooper and Seton noted this problem in the earlier versions yet the problem was not solved in the latest hymnal. See, Wayne Hooper & Bernard E Seton, "Is it Time for a New Hymnal," *Ministry* 54, April 1981, 11. The 1941 *SDA Hymnal* has three hymns dedicated to Christ's heavenly priesthood ministry (Hymns 137-139).

¹³⁸ Edward Heppenstall, *Christ Our High Priest*, 66.

¹³⁹ Jacques B. Doukhan, "Loving the Sabbath as a Christian." in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*. Edited by Tamara C. Eskenazi, Daniel J. Harrington and William H. Shea (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1991), 159.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Scriven, 'Gladness of Hope' in *Festival of the Sabbath*, Roy Branson, ed., (Takoma Park, MD: Association of Adventist Forums, 1985), 46.

of rejoicing,”¹⁴¹ “a day of delight and joy.”¹⁴² It is “a time of worship, of joy, and of delight in God and in his salvation,”¹⁴³ “a day of delightful communion with God and with one another.”¹⁴⁴ “[I]ts weekly return,” according to Ellen White, “must be hailed with joy.”¹⁴⁵

Embedded in this understanding is the fact that the Creator and Saviour, in whom the gathered body finds its rest, extends a special invitation for others also to enter into His joy. In Isaiah 58:13-14, God promises that “if . . . you call the Sabbath a delight . . . then you will find your joy in the Lord.”¹⁴⁶ Ellen White links this delight to the believers’ experience in Christ. She wrote that “To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight.”¹⁴⁷ Joyful celebration is also connected to the Sabbath in Psalm 92 where God’s mighty deeds in creation and redemption, as well as His eternal sovereignty are emphasised.¹⁴⁸

Since Adventists view the Sabbath as a celebration of God’s creative and redeeming acts, what is normally expected in worship services is a sense of joy. Christian worship is filled with delight—the delight that worshippers find in their rest with Christ and being

¹⁴¹ Raoul Dederen, ‘Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath’ in Kenneth Strand, ed., *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington D.C: Review & Herald), 1982, 298

¹⁴² Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 59

¹⁴³ Niels-Erik Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, Andrews University Monographs Studies in Religion no. 11 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1978), 68.

¹⁴⁴ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 281.

¹⁴⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, 274.

¹⁴⁶ Hazel and Murdoch note, “The person who calls the Sabbath a delight is also the one who is to delight in the Lord (Is. 58:14) Hazel and Murdoch, 48. They further observe that “the idea of delight with regard to the Sabbath combines both worship of the Lord and enjoying enjoyment through and in Him. Hazel and Murdoch, 49.

¹⁴⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 289.

¹⁴⁸ See Richard Davidson’s extensive treatment in *Love Song for the Sabbath*, 1988.

satisfied in His presence. The joy of the Gospel is specially expressed in heartfelt singing as the congregation ascribes glory to God for His marvelous gift of salvation.

Expressions of joy may also take other forms. According to cultures, it is not uncommon to hear outbursts of “Hallelujah” or “Praise the Lord” or “Thank you Jesus” during some Adventist worship services, expressing appreciation and thankfulness for divine blessings. Raoul Dederen writes that, “Once every seven days, on the Sabbath day, the Christian, like the Israel of old, is specially invited to remember that God is a liberator who has put an end to all bondage and slavery.”¹⁴⁹ Freed from the bondage of sin and of the devil, worshippers can celebrate with gladness what Jesus has accomplished for their salvation.

Expressions of joy are not self-induced; they are the result of the Spirit’s action as worshippers reflect upon God’s character and His mighty deeds in history and their own experience. “Only persons who belong to God, who centre their existence in His love, who worship Him as the source of their being and the key to all life, can have on the seventh day an experience of festivity, renewal and hope.”¹⁵⁰ In sum, their Sabbath celebration depends on their Christian experience.

The Sabbath helps Adventist worshippers to remember and praise Christ as their Redeemer. The worship hour is a Christ-centred, festive and celebrative part of this time. Unsurprisingly, the theme of “feast” is often associated with both the Sabbath¹⁵¹ and

¹⁴⁹ Raoul Dederen, ‘Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath’ in Kenneth Strand, *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington D.C.: Review & Herald, 1982)

¹⁵⁰ Charles Scriven, “Gladness in Hope” in *Festival of the Sabbath*, 84.

¹⁵¹ See for instance, see Roy Branson, *Festival of the Sabbath* (Takoma Park, MD: Association of Adventist Forums, 1985); Moltmann’s treatment in *God in Creation*, 275-292 and Abraham Heschel’s *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*.

Christian worship in general.¹⁵² To quote Moltmann, the Church is a “Messianic community” which, through worship, is enjoying “a messianic feast” in a foreign land.¹⁵³ The fundamental reality here is that “the messianic feast” is celebrated by the Church, but organised by God. It is He who calls the meeting, invites His children and welcomes them into His presence where they can experience the fullness of His joy.

6.3.2.3 Worship as Fellowship.

Corporate worship is communal by definition. The assembled body portrays the reality of salvation that has been experienced by those who have responded to the Christian *kerygma*. The liturgical act of gathering together affirms a biblical understanding of the nature of the church as an assembled people “that belongs to God because He has called it into being, dwells within it, and rules over it.”¹⁵⁴ In worship, the “called out” come together to reinforce their identity as the body of Christ.

Adventists view the Sabbath as a “festival of fellowship.”¹⁵⁵ Jacques Doukhan notes a close link between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Sabbath observance:

It is noteworthy that the Sabbath commandment is located in the centre of the Decalogue, sandwiched between the section dealing with the relationship with God (commandments 1–3) and the section dealing with the relationship with humans (commandments 5–10) and functions as the hinge of the two sections. The Sabbath is

¹⁵² In his discussion Wannenwetsch in *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004), 21ff makes reference to the influential work of Schleiermacher, *Praktische Theologie*, and Harvey Cox’s *Feast of Fools* amongst others on the essential mode of worship as feast. See also, Justo L. Gonzales, “Worship as Fiesta,” in Dwight W. Vogel, *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 255-260.

¹⁵³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 262.

¹⁵⁴ Raoul Dederen, ‘The Church’ in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 542.

¹⁵⁵ Roy Branson, ‘Festival of Fellowship’ in *Festival of the Sabbath*, Roy Branson, ed., (Takoma Park, MD: Association of Adventist Forums, 1985), 46.

itself the only commandment which explicitly refers to both relationships, with God and with humans.¹⁵⁶

This principle influences the assembling of God's people. The sense of fellowship is much prized as worshippers greet each other in the parking lot and in the sanctuary. Forms of affection are expressed by shaking hands, a hug, a kiss or a smile. Many congregations position "greeters" in the church lobby to welcome worshippers. Others encourage fellowship by including a time of mutual welcoming during the service as worshippers walk across the aisle and sing a simple song like,

Family, we are family. Jesus, He is our Lord.
And I'm so glad He brought us all together...
I'm so glad that the Father is our God.

Many worshippers refer to each other as "brother" and "sister." This sense of fellowship is intensified during Communion Service, especially during the foot washing, an ordinance which "conveys a message of forgiveness, acceptance, assurance, and solidarity, primarily from Christ to the believer, but also between the believers themselves."¹⁵⁷ Participation in the Lord's Supper "contributes to the unity and stability of the church, demonstrating true communion with Christ and one another."¹⁵⁸

This sense of fellowship is also expressed during the pastoral prayer when individuals with special burdens and needs may, in some churches, be surrounded by fellow worshippers joining them at the front of the sanctuary for prayer.

The same spirit of fellowship is reflected even after the church service. Many Adventist churches regularly organise *potlucks* where each family brings homemade food to

¹⁵⁶ Jacques Doukhan, "What Can Adventism Learn From The Jews About The Sabbath?," *Spectrum* 39/1, Winter 2011, 18-19.

¹⁵⁷ *Church Manual*, 2015, 123-124.

¹⁵⁸ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 231.

be shared with all. Other churches have a dedicated team that cook food every week to allow a time of table fellowship after the church service.

Yet, “[a]ssociating for an hour or two at the Sabbath worship does not represent all the benefits and joys the Christian experiences in fellowship.”¹⁵⁹ A variety of other activities are encouraged on others days as well. These include small group networks, recreation and “visiting and encouraging those who are discouraged or lax in their Christian experience and commitment to Christ . . . or members who are unable to attend services.”¹⁶⁰ In this way, the Sabbath serves to organise the life of the church throughout the week.

The above sense of fellowship is essential to worship. Without it, the church fails to reveal the reality of God’s Kingdom. A united worshipping community exhibits the power of the Gospel. Such unity is made possible only through “the unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3).¹⁶¹ This sense of community is not restricted to church members. For Christian fellowship to be genuine, it needs to include the visitors too. This explains why Adventists have a long-standing practice of celebrating open Communion as an expression of Christian love and acceptance.¹⁶²

As a “festival of worship,” the Sabbath is also an occasion to demonstrate solidarity and equality. Kenneth Strand sees the Sabbath as a “Leveler” because God’s rest is accessible to all human beings, irrespective of their status or condition.¹⁶³ Niels Erik Andreasen shares a

¹⁵⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook*, 130.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁶¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 202-203.

¹⁶² *Church Manual*, 2015, 126.

¹⁶³ Kenneth E. Strand, “The Sabbath,” 511.

similar view when he argues that “genuine freedom [in Christ] must lead to equality.”¹⁶⁴

Andreasen observes further that, “On the Sabbath, the executive and his janitor share the same pew; no one gives the other an order or extract a service. The Sabbath sets all people free and makes them equals. It restores the ideals of solidarity and unity in the community.”¹⁶⁵ As such, the Sabbath is a reminder that God does not exhibit preferential treatment, but invites all to enjoy His love and presence indiscriminately. This understanding has far-reaching implications for everyday life because, correctly “[u]nderstood and applied, this concept would eliminate racism, bigotry, and any form of discrimination.”¹⁶⁶

From a liturgical point of view, the meaning and nature of corporate worship is not individual, but communal. Worship includes a dialogue and a communion along vertical and horizontal axes, as it unites us both with God and with one another. In its simplest and most authentic form, worship makes place for the other, the poor, the orphan, the widow, the marginalized, the outcast and the downtrodden. It cannot be elitist or exclusivist. There is no true Sabbath celebration without justice and solidarity. Kenneth Strand observes: “The Sabbath reminds us that we all share a common salvation and that the One who is our Lord and Saviour is also the Lord and Saviour of our Christian brothers and sisters. As we worship from Sabbath to Sabbath, we grow in mutual love and respect.”¹⁶⁷

This love cannot be confined within the walls of the church. It must extend to those outside. Ellen White puts it this way:

¹⁶⁴ Niels Erik Andreasen, “Jubilee of Freedom and Equality” in *Festival of the Sabbath*, Roy Branson, ed., *Spectrum*, 1985.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁶⁶ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 85.

¹⁶⁷ Kenneth Strand, *The Sabbath in Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 512.

The necessities of life must be attended to, the sick must be cared for, the wants of the needy must be supplied. He will not be held guiltless who neglects to relieve suffering on the Sabbath. God's holy rest day was for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent. God does not desire His creatures to suffer an hour's pain that may be relieved upon the Sabbath or any other day.¹⁶⁸

Such an understanding of worship and of the Sabbath becomes a liberating factor for the relief and emancipation of those in need. Worship in the church is tied to loving service in the world. This link is often highlighted during the announcement period when special community projects are brought to the church's attention. Similarly, special outreach for the needy and the sick are organised as Sabbath afternoon programs to encourage church members to share God's love. In sum, worship builds the church community so that it can impact those in the wider community.

Having examined the Sabbath as it pertains to salvation history, in the subsequent section I explore the connection between the Sabbath and restoration.

6.4 SABBATH AND RESTORATION

6.4.1 Foundational Principles

At the heart of Adventist Sabbath-keeping is the understanding of God as Creator and Restorer. Hence, both of these aspects of God's relationship with humankind are reflected in Sabbath worship. The Sabbath points beyond death to the hope of eternity.¹⁶⁹ Raymond Holmes puts it this way:

In its worship the Seventh-day Adventist Church not only looks back in grateful memory, but also looks forward in confident hope. That hope rests firmly on the biblical promises concerning the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Adventist worship takes place, therefore, on the threshold of His coming.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 207.

¹⁶⁹ Gerald Winslow, "Moment of Eternity," in *Festival of the Sabbath*, 94.

¹⁷⁰ Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 53.

Protology, soteriology and eschatology constitute the particular perspective from which Adventist worship is offered. The gathered assembly does not only look backward with gratitude to God's creative and redemptive acts in Christ, it also looks forward to the future restoration of the entire creation. This is crucial to a theology of worship, appreciating that worship, according to Daniel Hardy, "is an encompassing activity in which all the dynamic of creation and eschatology is incorporated within the response made to that glory."¹⁷¹

We find the Sabbath in the context of the new heavens and the new earth. In Isaiah 66:23, the Sabbath is mentioned in the context of eschatological worship. Ellen White expands on this idea by observing that, "Heaven and earth will unite in praise, as "from one Sabbath to another" (Isa. 66:23) the nations of the saved will bow in joyful worship to God and the Lamb."¹⁷² Hasel and Murdoch offer a standard Adventist interpretation of this text as follows:

In the realm of the new creation beyond history there will be total restoration of the break brought about by sin. 'All flesh' in the sense of all mankind, the redeemed remnant of all times, will worship before the Lord Sabbath after Sabbath. As the Sabbath was the climax of the first creation and destined for all mankind (Gen. 2:1-3), so the Sabbath will again be the climax of the new creation and destined again for all mankind in the new heaven and the new earth.¹⁷³

Hazel and Murdoch conclude that "the Sabbath is a powerful catalyst of apocalyptic eschatology and its future hope."¹⁷⁴ Zinke offers a Christocentric interpretation of the passage

¹⁷¹ Daniel W. Hardy, "Creation and Eschatology," in Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The Doctrine of Creation* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 128.

¹⁷² Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, 769.

¹⁷³ Gerhard F. Hasel and W. G. C. Murdoch, "The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982), comment, 49.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

in Isaiah 66:23 and avers that “the Sabbath is a reminder of God’s total plan for His children. It is the great arch spanning time from a perfect creation to a perfect recreation. It represents Christ in the creation of man, in the redemption of man, and in the recreation of man’s original home.”¹⁷⁵ Just as in the creation, God’s new creation will culminate in the Sabbath. “Because it was made before sin, it will remain after sin is no more (Isa. 66:22, 23).”¹⁷⁶

In brief, Adventists believe that worship, culminating in Sabbath fellowship, will be the outcome of the perfectly renewed creation.¹⁷⁷ Ultimately, the Creator will fulfill His restorative agenda for His entire creation. He will “make all things new” (Rev. 21:5) and uninterrupted communion will be a tangible reality for “they shall see his face” (Revelation 22:4). Sabbath rest, the promised goal of the redeemed creation, will crown the divine-human full reunification. At that time, weekly Sabbath worship will be the climax of all activities in heaven when the redeemed will acknowledge that the Creator, Redeemer and the Restorer of all things is worthy of all praise.

6.4.2 Implications for Adventist Worship

We now consider the eschatological dimension of the Sabbath in Adventist worship. In commemorating the Sabbath, Adventists (1) anticipate the kingdom, (2) have a foretaste of heaven, (3) experience the eschatological presence of the Spirit, and as a result orient their lives toward (4) service and (5) evangelism.

¹⁷⁵ Edward E. Zinke, “A Theology of the Sabbath,” *Journal of Adventist Theology* 2/2 1991, 151.

¹⁷⁶ Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:802.

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, Barth also believes “History’s last day will be a Sabbath day, a time of freedom, and joy, of fellowship in “the rest of God Himself.” Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, bk. 1, 218.

6.4.2.1 Worship as an Anticipation of the Kingdom.

Adventism is defined by its eschatological hope. Belief in the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ explains their *raison d'être*. This understanding influences their approach to corporate worship. Adventist theologian, Richard Davidson, puts it this way: “As we joyfully anticipate the approach of the Sabbath every week, we assume the posture of the one eagerly anticipating the age to come.”¹⁷⁸

There are many ways in which Adventists express this anticipation in worship. One of these is the sermon. Adventist preachers often highlight “the signs of the times” announced by Jesus (Matt. 24:3-31; Luke 21: 7-36), as well as other apocalyptic texts, associating them with contemporary events to emphasize the approaching *eschaton* and the necessity of spiritual preparation for that climactic event. Another way in which believers anticipate God’s future is through singing. The *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* dedicates fewer hymns to the cross, the resurrection, the ascension and Christ’s heavenly priesthood (Hymns 154-180) than to the Second Advent and His future kingdom and reign (Hymns 200-227). Hymn number 214 captures this apocalyptic anticipation of the Kingdom. Here is the first stanza:

We have this hope that burns within our heart,
Hope in the coming of the Lord.
We have this faith that Christ alone imparts,
Faith in the promise of His Word.
We believe the time is here,
When the nations far and near
Shall awake, and shout and sing
Hallelujah! Christ is King!
We have this hope that burns within our heart,
Hope in the coming of the Lord.

Although less frequent, the Communion Service also is a special time when the assembly expresses its hope in God’s future. At the table, they “proclaim the death of the

¹⁷⁸ Richard M. Davidson, *A Love Song For The Sabbath*, 114.

Lord until He comes.” Through the Lord’s Supper, the assembly tells salvation history, as they commemorate deliverance from sin, experience corporate communion with Christ and anticipate the Second Advent.¹⁷⁹ For Adventists, the banquet table in heaven “is the climactic expectation to which the Lord’s Supper points us- the joy of future glory through a personal fellowship with Christ in his everlasting kingdom.”¹⁸⁰

Prayer also expresses that same anticipation. Prayers are offered in the awareness that God will have the last word. In the meantime, the church remembers humanity’s broken condition and petitions God for itself to be spiritually vigilant and mission oriented while interceding on behalf of the world.

As an eschatological community, the church praises and glorifies God while eagerly waiting for the Second Advent. “In its worship, the last-day church is on tip-toe, on the edge of its seat, on the threshold, eager to see and hear the Lord.”¹⁸¹ It proclaims the hope in God’s restorative agenda as embedded in the Sabbath.

Consequently, by anticipating God’s vision for the world, the Sabbath reinforces the identity of God’s people as an eschatological community waiting for the Kingdom. “The Sabbath brings the longing for God’s redemption within reach of every individual. It announces proleptically the coming (eschatological) time of redemption once a week.”¹⁸² Each gathering is an eschatological act where the community reminds itself that it does not belong to the kingdom of this world but to the heavenly Kingdom. As a result, they reinforce

¹⁷⁹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 229-233.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁸¹ Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 55.

¹⁸² Niels E. Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, 116.

their identity as “resident aliens” and remind themselves that “[a] Sabbath rest still awaits the people of God” (Heb. 4:9).¹⁸³

Such an understanding has profound implications for how people worship. For instance, preaching has a prophetic ring to it, challenging complacency and self-righteousness wherever found in the church. Petitionary prayers become freighted with a sense of solidarity as the assembly prays for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Singing is offered with eschatological expectancy until that day when “a single pulse of harmony and gladness” will beat “through the vast creation.”¹⁸⁴ Sabbath worship anticipates the coming Kingdom.

6.4.2.2 Worship as a Foretaste of Heaven.

In his treatment of the Sabbath, Raoul Dederen notes that “the Sabbath rest is even more than just a positive eschatological sign. It is also a sign that already grants participation in that to which it points, for even now it provides a foretaste of the future rests into God’s joyful rest.”¹⁸⁵

Sabbath worship emphasises the double meaning of the kingdom of God. On the one hand, it lays a strong emphasis on the fact that God’s Kingdom has not yet reached its final eschatological goal. For instance, Doukhan states that, “Salvation is cosmic by nature and has not yet occurred, although it has been anticipated and guaranteed through the event of the cross, and although God is intensely present in our lives through His blessings and our

¹⁸³ Reformed theologian, von Allmen stresses the eschatological character of worship as follows: “In summing up the process of salvation, the cult is also directed toward the future. It is not merely a representation of the death and victory of Christ, it is also an anticipation of His return and foreshadowing of the Kingdom which He will then establish.” Von Allmen, *Worship*, 35.

¹⁸⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 678.

¹⁸⁵ Raoul Dederen, “Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 300.

religious experiences.”¹⁸⁶ To put it differently, complete harmony between God and His creation will reach its fulfillment when sin is eliminated and evil is destroyed. On the other hand, the Sabbath reminds the church that meanwhile, it lives in eschatological times between the already and the not-yet of the promised messianic age, the first and second advents.¹⁸⁷

The Sabbath emphasises these two eschatological orientations, the future and the present. The eschatological dimension inscribed in the Sabbath is “a foretaste of our eternal future in God’s kingdom.”¹⁸⁸ This means that the eschatological vision of the Sabbath is not limited to the future; it also entails a vertical breaking through into the present situation. It must be remembered that Jewish traditions have for a long time regarded the coming of the Sabbath as an eschatological entrance of God into time,¹⁸⁹ a “foretaste of eternity in this world.”¹⁹⁰ Similarly, Seventh-day Adventists view the Sabbath as providing “a foretaste of our eternal future in God’s kingdom,”¹⁹¹ “a foretaste of the future entrance into God’s joyful

¹⁸⁶ Jacques Doukhan, “The Tension of Seventh-day Adventist Identity: An Existential & Eschatological Perspective,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 26/1 (2015), 32.

¹⁸⁷ Carlos Puyol, “Eschatologie Adventiste,” *Servir*, Numero 3, 1999, 19-27.

¹⁸⁸ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 281.

¹⁸⁹ Stephan Wahle, “Reflections on the Exploration of Jewish and Christian Liturgy from the Viewpoint of a Systematic Theology of Liturgy,” *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship: New Insights into Its History and Interaction* 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 169ff.

¹⁹⁰ Mishna Tamid 7.4 as referenced in Kenneth Strand, *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington D.C.: Review & Herald, 1982), 513.

¹⁹¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 281.

rest.”¹⁹² For them, it is “God’s special gift, enabling the human race to experience the reality of heaven on earth.”¹⁹³

Bernd Wannenwetsch observes that as a foretaste of the future age to come, the Sabbath “comes to visit us like a beloved, honoured guest, and takes us into its own time.”¹⁹⁴ However, Adventists insist that this Sabbath experience can only be apprehended by faith, as the author of the book of Hebrews makes it clear. The future promise of rest (Hebrews 4:1), characterized by the Sabbath (4:9) is already available to the believer but can be forfeited through unbelief. It is only by responding to the Gospel that we enter this rest. The only way to observe the Sabbath in the here and now is to live by faith in Christ (v.3) and by rejecting self-righteousness. As a result, “[r]edemption, understood as eternal rest which is both physical and spiritual in nature, can thus be actualized in a unique way by means of the weekly sabbath.”¹⁹⁵

According to Ellen White, “to those who worship God in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness it [the Sabbath] will be as the gate of heaven.”¹⁹⁶ To put it differently, Sabbath worship represents a drawing close to the threshold of heaven itself, as worshippers peer through heaven’s gate to catch a glimpse of God’s glory on display. The God who is coming at the end of the age is already present with His people as they gather to worship. As a blessed and sanctified day, the Sabbath allows worshippers to experience God’s presence in

¹⁹² Raoul Dederen, “Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath,” 300.

¹⁹³ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 281-282.

¹⁹⁴ Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens*, 348.

¹⁹⁵ Neils E. Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption: A Study of the Biblical Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press), 116.

¹⁹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:363.

a way that stands in marked contrast to the rest of the week. Thus, worship is a present reality which cannot be postponed. In sum, the Sabbath, for Adventists, constitutes God's invitation to share in heaven's worship in anticipation of the renewal of the whole cosmos.

In the Adventist understanding, the Sabbath is meaningful liturgically and experientially because "it provides time to commune with God through worship, prayer, song, the study of and on the Word, and sharing the Gospel with others."¹⁹⁷ It provides a unique "opportunity to experience God's presence,"¹⁹⁸ and provides the setting for a conversation between heaven and earth, between God and the body of Christ.

The Christian assembly, as a fellowship of believers or "holy priesthood," finds its ultimate fulfillment in the worship of God.¹⁹⁹ Through prayer, singing, preaching and the ordinances, God's people are reminded that God is at work in this world, as He prepares to usher in total restoration and renewal to this world with Christ's Second Coming.

6.4.2.3 Worship as Spirit-centred.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the Church and its worship makes God's Kingdom present with us. Accordingly, worship is a spiritual activity in the sense that it must be inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The assembly is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) and every believer is also a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). God dwells in the midst of His people and worship is the outcome of His presence.

¹⁹⁷ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 289.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁹⁹ Raoul Dederien, "The Church," 550.

The Sabbath attests to the Spirit's presence and activity. It provides an opportunity to recognise, reflect on, and respond to God's presence.²⁰⁰ The Sabbath also proclaims "His re-creative power in man's soul."²⁰¹ Response in worship is not possible without the presence and empowering of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart."²⁰²

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the worshipping community turns worship into an eschatological event.²⁰³ Worship provides worshippers a foretaste of the future glory by allowing them to experience the power of life of the kingdom here and now. As James Cone puts it, "worship is an eschatological invasion of God in the gathered community of victims, empowering them with the divine Spirit from on high."²⁰⁴ A sense of immediacy and an awareness of new possibilities characterises worship when the Holy Spirit is at work within the worshipping community. As a result of the dynamic presence of the Spirit, signs of the future kingdom can be experienced in the assembly.

Considering that worship is not a human initiative but the believers' response to God's intervention in history, authentic worship is both "*epiclesis* and *paraclesis*, i.e. the invocation of the Spirit to inspire and empower us and the coming of the Paraclete to help

²⁰⁰ Fritz Guy, "The Presence of Ultimacy," in *Festival of the Sabbath*, 32.

²⁰¹ Raoul Dederen, "Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath," in *Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 299.

²⁰² Ellen G. White, *The Youth Instructor*, April 16, 1903.

²⁰³ Alain G. Coralie, "The Trinitarian Dynamic of Worship," *Ministry*, March 2011, 22.

²⁰⁴ Cited in James Harris, *Pastoral Church Theology: A Black-Church Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 89.

us.”²⁰⁵ There can be no teaching, no preaching, no healing of human brokenness, no genuine communion unless worshipping communities are baptised into the creative and life-giving power of the divine Spirit. In Adventist worship, the epicletic element is specially found at the beginning of the service with the ‘Invocation,’ as the church “recognises and invites the presence of God.”²⁰⁶ For instance, here is the (extemporaneous) invocation offered at

Restoration Praise Center in Bowie, Maryland on March 31, 2018:

Father God, we have come into this place, gathered in Your name to worship You, all because of Calvary. We magnify Your name because You alone are worthy. We lift You up because You alone deserve all the glory. Lord, You deserve all our praise; so we bless Your Holy name. We pray that You will tabernacle with us, today, that Your Spirit will usher in a calm and a sense of worship and that Your angels will come alongside us to lift Your name up as we praise you for all You have done and all that You continue to do and all that You will do in our lives. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.²⁰⁷

Such prayers of invocation are offered in the trust that God hears and answers the pleading for His manifest presence among worshippers. Similarly, preachers also often pray before their sermon, seeking for the Holy Spirit’s illuminating presence upon the preaching of the Word, often quoting Psalm 19:14 in closing: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” Most significantly, the extemporary nature of most Adventist pastoral prayers points again to the epicletic element of Adventist worship. The worship from start to finish depends on the Spirit’s presence. The gathered community meets in the expectation that the Spirit will be present and at work in their midst as they reach out to God in worship. In Adventism, the

²⁰⁵ Torrance, *Theological Foundations*, ed., Anderson, 380.

²⁰⁶ *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook*, 124.

²⁰⁷ I was personally present at this worship service and later retrieved the content of the invocation prayer by reviewing the service on the church’s Facebook account accessed August 25 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/restorationpraisecenter/videos/1621330384630600/>.

work of the Holy Spirit in worship is linked to the life of worshippers as individuals and to the assembly as a whole rather than to the performance of specific rituals.

By tracing salvation history to its source, Sabbath worship recognises that the Triune God is fully activity in the life of the worshipping community and in the world. Worship is made possible by the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.

6.4.2.4 Worship as a Life of Service.

In as much as Christian worship is authentic, contemplating God's future can lead God's people to be involved in the here and now.²⁰⁸ The question is: what kind of impact do Adventist weekly worship gatherings have on the life of the church and the world at large? Dederen observes that, "Sabbath worship is not to be conceived as an isolated act, one that removes man from his everyday world. On the contrary it is the centre from which every day of the week receives its meaning and light."²⁰⁹ Hence, any discussion of the implications of the Sabbath is incomplete unless we connect it to life as worship. Continuous worship is the lifestyle of the true believer. Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:1 "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God" is particularly relevant here as "this is your true and proper worship."

Christian worship cannot be limited to liturgical practices at a special time or space. Worship encompasses the whole of life, both "adoration and action."²¹⁰ Don Saliers, in exploring the implications between liturgy, belief and behaviour, emphasises that "it is in the

²⁰⁸ Susan J. White, *Foundations of Christian Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 3-5

²⁰⁹ Raoul Dederen, "Reflections on the Sabbath," 301.

²¹⁰ D. A. Carson, "Worship under the Word," in *Worship by the Book*, ed., D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 23-24.

world that God is to be glorified by doing the works of God.”²¹¹ If worship is not translated into acts of justice, mercy and love, that is an indication that “Christ’s liturgy is not fruitfully enacted.”²¹² Weekly worship and daily life are interdependent. For Saliers, it is important to keep in balance the “critical reciprocity between the *lex orandi* (pattern of prayer) and the *lex credendi* (pattern of belief)” as well as the “*lex agendi* (pattern of intention-action) of the church.”²¹³ Worship and service are the true vocation of the church.²¹⁴ According to Wannenwetsch, “the practice of worship—rightly performed—leads people to corporate action, joining in and celebrating the politics of God, it enables them to act, judge and live faithfully according to their vocations as the “household-polis” of God.”²¹⁵ Similarly, von Allmen states that the church is “expressly commissioned to be dispersed in the world, to penetrate it in every part, to live there on the Christ who has given himself to the Church, in order to make him known and loved in the world.”²¹⁶ Both liturgy and service need to be integrated in order to maintain the integrity of Christian witness.

For Adventists, Sabbath worship is a place where the assembly is restored and empowered to live a life of praise and service. They would agree with Bernd Wannenwetsch who notes that “the sanctification of our lives grows out of the sanctification of the

²¹¹ Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 177.

²¹² Saliers, 177.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 187; Kevin Irwin uses the term “*lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*” to signify the same view (see, Kevin W. Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 55-56.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 180-183.

²¹⁵ Bernd Wannenwetsch, *The Political Worship of the Church*, 293.

²¹⁶ Von Allmen, The Lord’s Supper, 12. Quoted in Bryan Spinks, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Christology, Trinity, and Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 292.

Sabbath.”²¹⁷ The life of contemplation (*vita contemplativa*) cannot negate the life of action (*vita activa*). In essence, worship also means giving glory to God through a consecrated life of service. Or, as Fritz Guy puts it, “To believe in the Advent hope is to be eager, patient and active.”²¹⁸

“True Sabbath observance will lead to the work of reformation pictured in Isaiah 58:5-12”²¹⁹ “to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke... to share [our] food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter...to clothe the naked... [to] do away with the yoke of oppression... and satisfy the needs of the oppressed.” Ellen White repeatedly addresses this liberating aspect of Sabbath-based worship. In 1891, she wrote thus:

True worship consists in working together with Christ. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The love of Christ dwelling in the heart, will be manifested in earnest effort to accomplish the work which Jesus came to do. Kind words, deeds of benevolence, of tender care for the needy and the afflicted—this is the fruit that grows naturally upon the good tree.²²⁰

Elsewhere, she calls for a more intentional emphasis on service, using the analogy of producing fruits for the Kingdom:

Faithful work is more acceptable to God than the most zealous and thought-to-be, holiest worship. True worship consists in working together with Christ. Prayers, exhortation, and talk are cheap fruits, which are frequently tied on, but fruits that are manifested in good works, in caring for the needy, the fatherless, and widows, are genuine fruits, and grow naturally upon a good tree.²²¹

²¹⁷ Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens*, 345.

²¹⁸ Fritz Guy, “Dynamics of the Advent Hope,” in Roy Branson, ed., *Pilgrimage of Hope* (Takoma Park, MD: Association of Adventist Forums, 1986).

²¹⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 4:307.

²²⁰ Ellen G. White, *Home Missionary*, July 1, 1891.

²²¹ *Review and Herald*, August 16, 1881.

White did not believe that true worship was limited to loving service to others.²²² Yet, she firmly believed that true worship involves the whole of life. The authenticity of our faith is measured by the way we treat others, especially those outside the faith community. For White, a Christ-centred, people-oriented life of service exalts God. True worship includes being collaborators with Christ in His ongoing ministry of reconciliation. She believed that “[i]n order for worship to be acceptable, it must be offered in faith and hope, and the life must be in harmony with it.”²²³ Consequently, “[f]orm and ceremony do not constitute the kingdom of God.”²²⁴ The fact is that Christ “hungers to receive from His vineyard fruit in holiness and unselfishness, deeds of goodness, mercy, and truth.”²²⁵ Hence, for Ellen White, “[w]hen our hearts are tuned to praise our Maker, not only in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs but also in our lives, we shall live in communion with Heaven. . . . This constitutes the true worship of God.”²²⁶ This implies a selfless life of commitment to Christ. “The condition and evidence of our discipleship is self-denial and the cross. Unless these are brought into our experience, we cannot know God; we cannot worship him in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness.”²²⁷

This means that authentic Christian communities serve as a powerful witness of what it means to be the people of God. “Created in answer to the call of the gospel of the kingdom,

²²² Compare Ellen White’s views on true worship in Chapter 5.

²²³ Ellen White, *Letter* 143, “To Marian Davis,” April 28, 1904.

²²⁴ Ellen White, *Evangelism*, 511. In fact, she laments that as the “vital principles of the kingdom are lost of Christ, “ceremonies become multitudinous and extravagant” falling short from what Christ requires from his people. *Ibid.*, 511.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 511.

²²⁶ Ellen White, *That I May Know Him*, 322.

²²⁷ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 2*, 1888, 50.

the church witnesses to the kingdom.”²²⁸ According to this understanding, corporate worship is incomplete unless it helps church members grow in Christ so that they can truly embody the Christian faith. Adventists share the conviction that the Sabbath is a reminder “that God has bestowed on human beings the need for fellowship and the capacity to love, care, and be compassionate.”²²⁹ Viewed in this way, Sabbath worship leads to a life of total response to God in loving service to others in the world.

Such an understanding of worship leads God’s people to live lives of integrity in this present world with the ethos of the world to come. Charles Scriver observes that, “The Sabbath heightens our awareness that we are going somewhere, intensifying our passion for life. The peace and the gladness of the future becomes revolutionizing principles in the here and now, enlarging our vision, giving vigor and direction to our existence.”²³⁰ Sabbath worship reminds believers that this earth is still God’s earth. Thus, even though the earth made new is their goal, God’s people still have a mission on this earth while they wait for its transformation. Worship restores and empowers people to live an authentic Christian life in the world. Holmes succinctly posits that, “While this worship on earth is a foretaste in heavenly splendor, it is worship conscious of the world, and its need for redemption and hope. The worshipping church is the ‘called out,’ while at the same time it is the ‘sent out.’”²³¹ This leads us to our next point - worship as evangelism.

²²⁸ Raoul Dederen, “The Church,” in *Handbook of Adventist Theology*, 542.

²²⁹ Kenneth A. Strand, “The Sabbath” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed., Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 511.

²³⁰ Charles Scriven, “Gladness in Hope,” in *Festival of the Sabbath*, 83.

²³¹ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song*, 158.

6.4.2.5 Worship as Evangelism.

Theologians are becoming increasingly aware that worship and evangelism form an indissoluble unity.²³² The worship of God involves witness as well as service. As Hardy and Ford put it, evangelism is “the horizontal dimension of praise—the content of praise repeated and explained to others so that they can join the community of praise.”²³³ For Adventists, mission derives from the *missio dei*. Worship and the *missio dei* are both a reflection of the divine nature of self-giving and restorative involvement with humanity.

Ultimately the mission of the church is to participate in Christ’s mission by announcing salvation to the whole world. This is linked to the believer’s baptismal identity and commitment to follow in Christ’s footsteps. According to Ellen White, “Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver.”²³⁴ Thus, the very identity of the church as the Body of Christ is defined by its mission in participating with Christ in His reconciling work in the world.

²³² The relationship between worship and mission has been widely commented. See for instance, Ruth A. Meyers, *Missional Worship, Worshipful Mission: Gathering as God’s People, Going Out in God’s Name* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014); Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995); Robert E. Webber, *Journey to Jesus: The Worship, Evangelism and Nurture Mission of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003); Stanley Hauerwas, “Worship, Evangelism, Ethics: On Eliminating the ‘And’.” In *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch before God: Essays in Honor of Don E. Saliers*, Anderson E. Byron, and Bruce T. Morrill, eds., (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 95-106; J. G. Davies, *Worship and Mission* (New York: Association Press, 1966); Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (New York: World Student Christian Federation, 1964).

²³³ Hardy and Ford, *Praising and Knowing God*, 19.

²³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 195. Ellen White also defines the specific task of evangelism this way: “He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost. Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 250.

For Adventists, the worship service is an arena for evangelism. Members are encouraged to bring visitors so that they can encounter and respond to the Gospel.²³⁵ Holmes stresses that “Adventist worship deliberately and consciously includes evangelistic elements,” because it is centred in the Creator/Redeemer.²³⁶ Corporate worship is conducted with the awareness that the gathered community may include “seekers” on the verge of making a decision for the Kingdom. Holmes notes the evangelistic dimension of worship as follows: “Worship that actively confesses sin, hears the good news of the gospel, responds in faith, and sings the praise of the Lord and the Lamb is a powerful evangelistic medium, a powerful witness for truth.”²³⁷ Adventist worship is therefore unapologetically driven by evangelistic intent. Holmes emphasises the role of “the Word of God, read and preached” in igniting and sustaining faith, for “it is in response to the Word of God, read and preached, that the redeemed sinner praises Lord and Lamb.”²³⁸

Because Scripture contains all that is necessary for salvation and “faith comes from hearing” (Rom. 10:17), the centre of Adventist worship is the proclaimed Word of God. Adventists believe that preaching is the appointed instrument to secure decisions for Christ. Preaching, thus, takes preeminence in the Adventist worship service.

This emphasis can be attributed to Adventism’s revivalistic beginnings (see Chapter Two). It follows that there is always the danger that Adventist corporate worship could risk lapsing into anthropocentricity, since the main focus is to secure decisions for the kingdom. This may cause the worship service to lack verticality as it revolves around human wants and

²³⁵ *Church Manual*, 2015, 121.

²³⁶ C. Raymond Holmes, *Church and Worship*, 12.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

desires instead of pointing to God. This self-centred mentality can potentially distort the nature of true worship by displacing God from the centre. True worship is a matter of proper focus. It “must first be God-focussed and then be human sensitive.”²³⁹ If this factor is negative, the corresponding positive is that, when worship and evangelism are treated as interrelated activities, the whole of life, including the liturgy, directs attention to God and His redeeming grace and sovereignty.

Worship and evangelism are closely linked. Authentic worship makes evangelism both the object of liturgical practices and a means of accomplishing this evangelistic goal. Holmes amplifies this understanding by observing that “Corporate worship is truly missionary and evangelistic in nature. When the church responds to the call to worship, it is enabled to respond to the call to evangelize.”²⁴⁰ He points out that evangelism “is the extension of the church’s worship life into the world.”²⁴¹

This Adventist insistence on the link between worship and evangelism has been shaped to a large extent by a prophetic message that speaks of worship, Revelation 14:6-12.²⁴² Adventists view this text as their mission imperative, their “special assignment.”²⁴³ They particularly focus on verses 6 and 7:

²³⁹ R. Kent Hughes, “Free Church Worship: the Challenge of Freedom,” in D.A Carson, ed., *Worship by the Book*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 151.

²⁴⁰ C. Raymond Holmes, *Church and Worship*, 12-13.

²⁴¹ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing a New Song*, 141.

²⁴² Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977).

²⁴³ George W. Reid, “Toward an Adventist Theology of Worship,” Biblical Research Institute, 8, accessed August 1, 2018. <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/advtheoworship.pdf>

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

From earliest times, Adventists have interpreted the above passage eschatologically and have believed it is an appropriate designation of themselves as a prophetic movement.²⁴⁴ Adventists consider this passage as God's "last appeal to the world calling them to repentance in view of the judgment . . . a prophetic and epochal end-time call, which both leads up to the second coming of Christ and produces the final harvest of the earth (Rev. 14:6-14)."²⁴⁵

Like the Sabbath, Revelation 14:6-7 brings together the doctrines of creation, redemption and eschatology. It points to God as Creator ("Worship him who made the heavens and earth"), Redeemer ("the eternal Gospel"), and Judge/Restorer ("the hour of his judgment has come"). The true ground of divine worship is found in the fact that God is the Creator "who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water," expressions that Adventists see as clear allusions to the Sabbath in Exodus 20:11.²⁴⁶ The "everlasting Gospel"

²⁴⁴ Hans K. Larondelle, "The Remnant and the Three Angels' Messages in Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, 883-7. Their mission statement reads: "The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to call all people to become disciples of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the everlasting gospel embraced by the three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6-12), and to prepare the world for Christ's soon return." <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/-/mission-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/>.

²⁴⁵ Larry L. Lichtenwalter, "The Seventh-Day Sabbath and Sabbath Theology in The Book of Revelation: Creation, Covenant, Sign," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 49/2 2012, 2011, 291.

²⁴⁶ Larry L. Lichtenwalter, "The Seventh-Day Sabbath and Sabbath Theology," 308; Jon Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 9/1-2 (1998): 183-185; Mathilde Frey, "Sabbath Theology in the Book of Revelation" in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, Angel Manuel Rodríguez ed., (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 127-137.

(Rev. 14:6) constitutes an appeal to true worship,²⁴⁷ which is offered at a time when “the hour of his judgment has come.”²⁴⁸

In this understanding, worship comprises liturgy but also a life of surrender and obedience that is evidenced in everyday actions.²⁴⁹ Accordingly, God is glorified “when true worship is restored and believers live the principles of God's kingdom.”²⁵⁰

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to establish the theological core of Adventist corporate worship based on their practice of keeping the seventh-day as the Sabbath. I have pointed out that the Sabbath tells the story of salvation. Thus, Adventist worship has its roots in creation, is made possible through redemption and is oriented towards the coming Kingdom of God. As a celebration of God's creative, redemptive and restorative vision for creation, the Sabbath “is a perpetual reminder that we are but creatures and totally dependent on Him.”²⁵¹ This view of God is foundational to the Adventist understanding of worship.

In Adventist thinking, the Sabbath provides the basis for a solid engagement with God in corporate worship. As a thread running through salvation history, the Sabbath connects

²⁴⁷ Kwabena Donkor, “The Three Angels’ Messages, Creation Theology, and Worship,” in *Let’s Worship Him: World Adventist-Jewish Congress Papers July 2016*, Richard Elofer ed., (Silver Spring, MD: World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center, 2018), 148.

²⁴⁸ There is an interesting parallel in the first part of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1-11): Creator: *For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them* (vs.11). Redeemer: *I am the Lord, who brought you out of the Egypt, out of the land of slavery* (vs.2). Judge: *For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing...those who hate me, but showing love to those who love me and keep my commandments* (vss.5, 6).

²⁴⁹ Ranko Stephanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 441-443; Jacques Doukhan, “Fear the Judge and Worship the Creator: The Three Angels Message and the Day of Atonement” in *Let’s Worship Him: World Adventist-Jewish Congress Papers July 2016*, Richard Elofer ed., (Silver Spring, MD: World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center, 2018), 58-59.

²⁵⁰ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 165.

²⁵¹ C. Raymond Holmes, *Sing A New Song*, 32.

past and future, thereby defining present identity. It enables Adventists to rediscover their original and ultimate purpose in life, which is to worship the Creator.

As a divine gift of holy time, the Sabbath reminds Adventists that Christian worship is not fundamentally people striving to connect with God; rather it is a celebration of how God reaches out to people, uniting them to Himself. The Sabbath is a reminder that worship is not a human pursuit of God, but a response to what God has already given. For Adventists, worship means participating in the incredible drama of salvation history and being transformed into the image that God had in mind initially at creation (Gen. 1:26).

CHAPTER SEVEN

7 CONCLUSION

My aim in this study has been to explore and understand Seventh-day Adventist worship. This research has been necessary for many reasons. First, there are not many academic studies on Adventist worship. Second, the few that are available proceed mostly from a biblical, systematic or pastoral perspective. Little attention is given to actual liturgical practices. Third, there has been no serious attempt to trace a comprehensive history of Adventist worship. The connection between Adventist theology and Adventist worship has not been extensively studied.

For this reason, I have chosen to use liturgical theology as an instrument to satisfactorily examine Adventist worship and its embedded theology. I limited the scope of investigation to American Adventists whose worship practices are similar to those of the larger worldwide Adventist community. I examined the history, practice and overall theological understanding of Adventist worship before formulating what I believe to be the core of its theology.

Throughout this study, I have understood that “Christian liturgy is neither a ‘prayed dogma’ nor an obvious source of revelation.”¹ Merely superimposing doctrine on liturgy can be an artificial process and letting liturgy determine belief is fraught with

¹ Stephan Wahle, “Reflections on the Exploration on Jewish and Christian Liturgy from the Viewpoint of a Systematic Theology of Liturgy” in Albert Gerhards & Clemens Leonhard, *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 170. See also Christopher Ellis, *Gathering*, 245.

dangers. However, the interaction of the liturgical practices of a community and its theological convictions do make possible a better understanding of both the worship and theological convictions of that community.

Both worship and theology are human pursuits which have the goal of acknowledging who God is and what He has done. For this reason, Adventism will always need to discover (or rediscover) the vital link between theology and liturgical practices. It will need to be continually engaged in understanding the liturgical implications of its theology and the theological implications of its liturgy. Unless this link is conscientiously explored, there is a danger that a wedge will be driven between what Adventism professes in books and what it practices in the pulpit and in the pews.

Constantly rehearsing and celebrating God's action in history will ensure that God is known and worshipped for who He is and for what He has done. This dialogical movement could be discerned more deeply if Adventist worship were made more consciously Trinitarian. The creational, soteriological and eschatological aspect of Sabbath worship should be further explored to see how these fit into an overarching Trinitarian pattern. The Father's role in creation, the Son's role in salvation and the Holy Spirit's role in testifying to the present dimension of God's coming kingdom could be emphasised. Adventism will always need to keep in mind that its worship is directed to the Triune God who initiates, accompanies and empowers its worship. Otherwise, its worship would always run the risk of becoming people-centred rather than God-centred.

Finally, despite any remaining flaws, Adventist worship can hope to contribute to liturgical discourse among fellow Christians. Despite its distinctive understanding of worship, it has been relatively silent in liturgical conversations. This is ironic since it stands in a tradition which believes Revelation 14:6, 7 is a renewal God desires for the entire Church, that is, to "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment

has come; and [to] worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” The emphasis within Adventism on liturgical simplicity and attention to salvation history invites reflection and dialogue with fellow Christians in every communion.

Soli Deo Gloria

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